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FA ME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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DOING HIS LEVEL BEST

OR, WORKING HIS WAY UP

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—The Man from the West.

"Hello, sonny!"

It was a blustering, overcast day in the first week in April, and Will Melville, a strong-looking boy of fifteen, his frank, open countenance flushed from recent exercise, was securing a dilapidated sailboat to a small wooden platform extending a few feet out into a narrow creek that branched off of Maple River, where he was hailed as above. The boy looked up and saw a stalwart, bearded man, with a deeply bronzed countenance, standing upon the top of the bank behind him.

"Well, sir," replied Will, judging the man was in quest of some information.

"You live around here, I s'pose?" said the stranger, interrogatively.

"I do," answered Will.

"Know a man by the name of Amos Skinner?"

"That's the man I live with."

"What's your name?"

"Will Melville."

The stranger whistled softly and seemed to look upon the boy with a new interest.

"Haven't any father or mother, I s'pose?"

"No, sir."

"Mr. Skinner supports you, doesn't he?"

"I work for Mr. Skinner. He boards me and gives me \$7 a month wages."

"Is Mr. Skinner a farmer?"

"He is."

The stranger gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Where does he live?"

"In that white house yonder."

"Got a wife, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sir," replied Will, wondering how many more questions the inquisitive stranger was going to ask.

"Any children?"

"One son, Simon Skinner."

The stranger looked at Will reflectively.

"I once knew a man by the name of George Melville, out in Cripple Creek. He said he came from these parts."

"That was my father, sir," said Will, eagerly.

The stranger did not appear to be very much surprised at the boy's admission.

"George Melville told me that he had a wife

and son in Maywood, at the head of Arlington Valley."

"That's right," said Will. "Father was a carpenter in Maywood before he went out West. That was many years ago, and I was only a little boy at the time he left to make his fortune, as he said, in the Cripple Creek diggings, where gold had just been discovered in great quantities. Mr. Skinner, who was a friend of his father's—in those days he was not so well off as he is now, but worked a small farm on shares—went with him. After a few months father wrote that he and Mr. Skinner had got hold of a claim which had turned out to be very rich. He expected to make enough money in a few months to be able to return home very well off. Enough, he said, to build a fine house in the village and live the rest of his life without the necessity of returning to his trade."

"Well," said the stranger, "didn't he?"

"No, sir. That was the last word mother ever received from him."

"How was that?" asked the stranger, with a curious look in his eyes.

"Because——" The boy choked up a little, and tears glistened in his eyes. "Because he died out in the diggings."

"Oh, he did!" exclaimed the stranger, in a peculiar tone. "You are sure that he died?"

"Yes, sir. A few weeks after mother received father's last letter Mr. Skinner returned to Maywood. He called at our home and told mother that he was the bearer of sad tidings. He said that he and father were partners in a claim which proved to be a rich one. That they had sold out the claim to a syndicate that was buying up all the property around in that section. Father and he had each received \$20,000 in gold coin. They had arranged to return together to Maywood. Two days before they were to start he said father suddenly disappeared. Mr. Skinner said he and three other men had searched the district to try and find out what became of him. For a week they failed to discover the slightest clue. Then they found the body of a man at the foot of a certain precipice. The body was much battered and the face wholly unrecognizable. But Mr. Skinner said he was certain that it was his friend George Melville,

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for he identified the clothes and a jack-knife found in one of the pockets. He felt quite sure that father had been enticed to that spot by some of the desperadoes of the district who had heard of his good fortune, and murdered for his money, which he had changed into bills and carried about his person in a money belt."

"That was the story Mr. Skinner told your mother, was it?"

"Yes, sir. As Mr. Skinner had not positively identified the dead man, though he said he had little doubt on the subject, mother refused to believe for a long time that father was actually dead. She wrote to persons in Cripple Creek who had known father, but could only get a confirmation of Mr. Skinner's story. Finally, after many months had passed without any favorable tidings, mother at last gave up all hope. She had to take in sewing to support herself and me, as we had no money, until at last she took sick and died."

"But Mr. Skinner came home well off, didn't he?"

"I believe so."

"And didn't he do anything to help your mother?"

"No, sir."

"And how did it happen you came to work for Mr. Skinner?"

"After mother died he offered me a job on his new farm, and I have been with him two years."

"He gives you seven dollars a month and your keep, you say?"

"Yes, sir; but he charges me with everything I break. And he doesn't pay me anything in winter and early spring when I attend school, though I have to do all the chores and many other things before and after school times."

"At that rate you haven't saved much money," said the stranger, with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, sir. I haven't any money at all."

"Did you ever feel like running away?" continued the inquisitive stranger. "You needn't be afraid to tell me, for I shan't give you away."

Will wouldn't admit whether he had ever felt that way or not. Suddenly the boy looked up and said:

"You said you knew my father out at Cripple Creek. Did you know Mr. Skinner there, too?"

"Yes," replied the man, guardedly. "I knew him slightly."

"Are you thinking of calling on him?"

"I had some such idea," admitted the other, slowly.

"You'll find him at the house now, I guess."

"All right. I'll go up and see."

The stranger nodded civilly to Will, turned on his heel and started for the lane the boy pointed out to him as the most direct way to reach Mr. Skinner's house. Will watched him with not a little interest.

that I should meet that boy the first thing. He's a fine-looking chap, too—just the kind of boy that will make his mark in the world in good time. I wonder what kind of youth Skinner's son is like? Maybe I shall see him. From what I know of his father I haven't any very great opinion of him. On the contrary, Will Melville is just like his father in a great many ways, and will be more like him what he grows up. Skinner proved himself a scoundrel out West, and he has been rubbing it in, I see, ever since he returned to the East. Well, I guess I'll be able to take some of the conceit out of him—and some of his well-guarded money, too," with a sardonic grin. "No doubt he thinks himself perfectly safe. The dark page in his past has doubtless long ceased to trouble him. It will be a shock to him when he learns that Jacob Luckstone is still alive and has him under his thumb. Squirm and wriggle as he may, he won't be able to escape until he comes down handsomely."

With a harsh laugh and a shrug of his shoulders Jacob Luckstone kept on up the lane and finally came to a gate which admitted to the farmyard. Here he came face to face with a boy of sixteen years who was amusing himself tantalizing a small bull terrier. Luckstone did not need any one to tell him who this boy was, for he read the Skinner family characteristics in every line of his homely, sallow and disagreeable countenance.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" demanded Simon Skinner, aggressively, pausing in his delightful employed and regarding the stranger with undisguised disgust.

"You are Simon Skinner, I suppose," said Luckstone, with a chuckle.

"I don't know that that is any of your business," retorted the boy in a disagreeable tone. "I don't know you, and from your general appearance I don't want to know you, either."

"Look here, Master Simon, is your father in the house?"

"My father! What do you want with him?"

"Business, sonny, business. I've come a long way to see him—maybe that's the reason I look so shabby. You mustn't judge a book by its cover."

"Does my father know you?" asked Simon, doubtfully.

"Well, rather," grinned Jacob Luckstone.

"What's your name?"

"Never mind my name, sonny. Just run into the house and tell your father that a man who used to know him in Cripple Creek is waiting outside to see him."

Simon didn't like to be ordered around in this fashion, and was about to refuse, but there was something in the stranger's manner which intimidated him, and so, very much against his inclination, he entered the house, hunted up his father, whom he found in the sitting-room reading that day's issue of the weekly Maywood News, and told him there was a man outside in the yard who wanted to talk to him.

"What does he look like?"

"Like a tramp—that is, he's awfully seedy, and his shoes are covered with dust as if he had walked some distance. He says he's come a long way to see you."

CHAPTER II.—A Ghost of the Past Appears to Mr. Amos Skinner.

"So that's George Melville's son," muttered the stranger to himself, as he walked up the lane which led to the pretentious looking farmhouse in which Skinner and his family dwelt. "Funny

"A long way!" exclaimed Mr. Skinner, in some surprise.

"He told me he knew you out in Cripple Creek."

"He said he knew me in Cripple Creek, he? You are positive he said that?"

"Yes. He seemed very confident that you'd see him."

"I think maybe I'd better see what he wants," said Mr. Skinner, in a tone so different from what he usually used under similar circumstances that his son regarded him with considerable surprise. "Show him into my library, Simon."

"Why don't you see him in the yard? He ain't fit to come into the house," objected the boy.

"I'd rather have him come into the library," replied his father, getting up from the rocking-chair with the intention of crossing the hall to that room.

"I wonder what's come over father all at once?" muttered Simon, as he retraced his steps to the yard. "He is usually pretty sharp and sweet in his dealings with trampish individuals like this man from Cripple Creek. He is not only willing to see this person, but he actually tells me to bring him into the library—just as if he was Mr. Hanford or somebody worth the attention. Looks mighty funny to me. I'd give something to know what the fellow wants to say to my father. He acts as if he could make the governor do something for him. I've a great mind to tell mother. No, I won't. One of the library windows is open. I'll show this man into the house and then I'll go outside, stand in the bushes under the window and listen to what goes on inside of the room."

Simon grinned at what he considered his own cuteness, walked into the yard and told the waiting stranger that his father would see him in his library.

"In his library, eh?" chuckled Jacob Luckstone.

"Follow me," said Simon, in a pompous way, strutting into the house.

The stranger followed him with alacrity.

Simon threw open the door of the library.

"Here's the man, father," he said, standing aside to allow the visitor to pass.

Mr. Skinner, who was seated at his desk close to the open window, turned in his chair to take a critical survey of his caller. The stranger, without waiting to be invited, coolly seated himself in a leather-covered arm-chair, crossed his long legs nonchalantly, removed his weather-stained hat from his head to the floor beside the chair, squirted a stream of tobacco juice into a cuspidor, and, looking the farmer sharply in the face, said:

"You don't seem to recognize me, Amos Skinner."

"I must confess you have the advantage of me, sir," replied Mr. Skinner, with a touch of his customary aggressiveness, his courage having risen when his visitor seemed to be a complete stranger to him.

"Then I'll introduce myself to you," grinned the man. "My name is Jacob Luckstone."

"Jacob Luckstone!" gasped Mr. Skinner, his

face turning a sickly white. "Impossible! Jacob Luckstone is——"

"Dead!" chuckled the stranger. "No, he isn't. Not by a long chalk. He's very much alive, as I'm willing to swear to, seeing as I'm the identical individual myself. But he's not as prosperous as he ought to be, which is a great pity. However, I think that can be rectified. It's a long lane that hasn't a turning. Are you quite sure that you don't recognize me now, Mr. Skinner?"

The speaker leaned forward, parted his beard from about his mouth, and exhibited to the farmer a peculiar-looking tusk which projected from under his upper lip. One look was enough for Amos Skinner. With a hoarse cry of dismay he fell back in his chair and regarded his visitor with a look of terror, as though a ghost of the past had suddenly risen before his startled eyes.

CHAPTER III.—The Price of Silence.

"I see you know me all right," said Jacob Luckstone, reaching forward and helping himself to a cigar out of a box that Mr. Skinner kept for his private consumption.

"I heard that you was dead," said Mr. Skinner at last, with a little shiver.

"I came mighty near turning up my toes soon after you left the diggings. I had a run-in with a chap—an onery cuss. He got the drop on me and I went to the hospital for repairs. When I pulled through I took the five thou. you kindly presented me with and went to Mexico, where I stayed until I was finally cleaned out three months ago. Being reduced to my uppers, I thought of you."

"Why of me?" asked the farmer, in shaky tones. "I thought you promised to cut me out of your mind when I paid you \$5,000 seven years ago for your silence as to a certain matter which I do not care to recall."

"Precisely!" replied his visitor. "I did promise, but when a fellow is on his last legs he kind of forgets such things as promises."

"But I haven't——" began Mr. Skinner.

"Yes, you have," retorted Luckstone, calmly puffing at his cigar. "You've got money all right. You're well off, and won't miss a thousand or two."

Mr. Skinner uttered a dismal groan.

"What are you kicking about?" asked Luckstone, contemptuously. "Besides the \$20,000 you got for your share of the Rainbow claim, you made a good thing out of George——"

"Hush!" cried the farmer imploringly. "Don't mention his name. I was mad when I——"

"Murdered——"

"No, no! I didn't murder him! I drugged him in order to——"

"Rob him of his money belt. Precisely. But he never recovered from the dose you gave him, so I have only got your word that you didn't intend to do him up for quits. However, that was your lookout. Then you robbed him of his \$20,000, and I was lucky enough to catch you doing it. It was my duty to hand you over to the authorities. Had I done so your neck would have been stretched in short order. Fortunately

for you, I was open to reason in the shape of a bribe. We compromised on \$5,000, and you promised on your part to do something for Melville's wife and child when you got back home. Have you kept your word, Skinner?"

"Well, I helped them along from time to time, and when Mrs. Melville died, two years ago, I took the boy to educate and bring up at my own expense."

"He works on your farm, same as any laborer, I s'pose."

"Well, yes, but I pay him for his time."

"Look here, Skinner, you can't fool me. I met young Will Melville down by the creek not an hour ago, and we had quite a talk together."

"You met that boy!" exclaimed Mr. Skinner, growing pale again. "Why, how did you know him?"

"I saw the boy coming up the creek in a sail-boat. I wanted to learn where you lived, so I waited till he landed, and then I asked him if he knew you. He said he did, that he lived with you. Then he pointed this house out to me. Something about the boy caused me to question him, and I learned a few things about you. He told me the story you brought from the West and repeated to his mother. He also told me that you never helped them to the extent of a single dollar, but that his mother had to take in sewing to support herself and him. When she died you took him to work on the farm at a small wage, which you are keeping back until he comes of age. That's the way you put it, but your idea is to prevent him from leaving you until you can get everything out of him you can. Isn't that it, Skinner?"

"No, no; I mean to deal fairly by him," said the farmer, hastily.

"I don't believe it," replied Jacob Luckstone bluntly. "I don't believe you are to be trusted. You said you would take care of George Melville's wife and son, and it's evident you haven't done so."

"You didn't tell the boy anything about——"

"Well, go on. Spit it out," said the visitor as the farmer paused abruptly.

"I'll give you a couple of hundred dollars if you'll promise to go away and never bother me again," said Mr. Skinner, with manifest reluctance.

"Look here, Skinner," said Luckstone in a decided way, as he chuckled the butt of his cigar into the spittoon. "Let's get right down to business. I want to go back to Mexico. I've got a good thing waiting for me there, but I've got to have \$2,000 to develop it. Give me \$2,500, and the chances are you'll never see me again."

"Twenty-five hundred dollars!" gasped Mr. Skinner. "Do you want to ruin me?"

His visitor laughed sardonically.

"I'd venture to take my oath that \$2,500 is a mere fleabite to you. Why, man alive, you brought \$35,000 back with you from Cripple Creek, at least half of which rightfully belonged to George Melville's heirs. That was seven years ago. You ought to be worth all of \$50,000 to-day."

Mr. Skinner held up his hands protestingly.

"I say you are!" almost roared his visitor, his eyes twinkling angrily. "However, I don't care a picayune what you're worth. All I want of you

is \$2,500. That I must and will have, or you can guess what'll happen. You see this document, don't you?" and Luckstone pulled a folded piece of paper out of his pocket and exhibited it to Mr. Skinner, who shrank from it as though it were a venomous snake. "Suppose I placed that in young Melville's hands, what would happen, do you think? It would be worth twice \$2,500—aye, more—to him to learn the truth about his father's fate. This paper in his hands would not only strip you of more than half your wealth, but land you behind the bars to boot, with something worse in prospect. I think I am letting you off easily. I ought to ask \$5,000 at least."

Mr. Skinner's face grew livid as he listened to Jacob Luckstone. He knew the Westerner had him in his power. Yet it was like pulling at his heartstrings to yield up a dollar.

CHAPTER IV.—Simon Takes a Mean Advantage of His Father.

"Well," said Luckstone, at length, after eyeing his man for several minutes in silence, "do I get the money, or don't I?"

"I haven't got but two hundred dollars in the house," replied Mr. Skinner, in a hollow voice. "You'll have to wait until I can get it."

"Oh, I'll wait, don't you worry about that," laughed the man from the West, putting his dust-stained boots on the chair just vacated by the owner of the house. "I've got him where the hair is short," he chuckled, as he watched Mr. Skinner walk from the room like a man who had just been stricken a heavy blow. "I'm sorry that I didn't make it \$5,000. He'd have to ante up just the same, or take the consequences. Come to think of it, if he really did defy me to do my worst, while I could put him into a mighty tight box, I should in all probability get myself in trouble along with him. I made myself an accessory to his crime when I accepted that bribe of \$5,000 to keep my mouth closed. It's a wonder he didn't think of that and use it in an effort to hold me off. He isn't smart even a little bit. In fact, he's a real easy mark. Well, \$2,500 isn't to be sneezed at when a fellow is as hard pushed as I am just now. I may make my fortune out of it."

He leaned back in his chair and indulged in sundry delightful air-castles which he expected to realize as soon as the \$2,500 was in his possession. After a short interval Mr. Skinner returned with bills amounting to \$200, which he very reluctantly handed over to his visitor. Jacob Luckstone shoved the money into a pocket of his vest and rose to go.

"Why, it's raining, isn't it? How far is it to the village hotel?"

"About two miles," replied Mr. Skinner.

"I don't mind a wetting much," said his visitor, with a short laugh, "for I'm used to roughing it; but I'd rather not present myself at the hotel looking like a drowned rat. My clothes aren't much to brag of at the best. If I look any worse they might refuse to take me in."

"You can remain here a while until the rain lets up. I'll fetch you in some supper. I'd in-

vite you to the table, but I don't think my wife would like it."

"I don't look highfaluting enough to suit her, eh?" grinned Luckstone. "Well, don't worry yourself about me. Bring me a bite of any old thing you have to spare and we'll let it go at that."

It was now growing dark, and Mr. Skinner lighted the lamp. Presently the supper bell rang and he excused himself. Half an hour passed away, and then the farmer appeared with a tray, followed by Simon, carrying a jug of milk. He set the tray down on a table, motioned his son to withdraw, which he did with some reluctance, and then he told Luckstone to help himself. The Westerner was pretty sharp set by this time, as he had eaten nothing since morning, so he accepted the invitation with alacrity and attacked the eatables forthwith. There was nothing left but the dirty dishes and empty milk pitcher when, with a sigh of satisfaction, he pushed his chair back from the desk, grabbed another cigar and began to puff away at it with evident relish. At last Jacob Luckstone spoke.

"It doesn't look as if I could reach the village in this downpour. What's the matter with letting me bunk in your barn to-night?"

Mr. Skinner stopped in his restless walk and regarded his undesirable visitor in silence. There was a small disused two-story barn down near the river. There was a considerable quantity of hay in the loft, and this would make a comfortable bed for a rough-and-ready person like Jacob Luckstone, who more times than he could remember had slept in far worse quarters. Accordingly, Mr. Skinner told his visitor where he had decided to put him for the night. This arrangement was satisfactory to the Western man, so the farmer got an umbrella and escorted Luckstone to the old barn and left him to turn in. When Mr. Skinner returned to the house he found Simon in the library with a cigarette in his mouth and his heels on one of the window-sills smoking away to beat the band.

"Simon," he exclaimed in an angry tone, "what does this mean? How dare you smoke cigarettes in my library? Take your feet from that window-sill instantly."

"I'm very comfortable as I am, dad," replied the boy, in a tone that showed little respect for his father. "And I think this is as good a place to smoke as anywhere else."

"Simon!" almost screamed Mr. Skinner.

"Oh, you can't shut my mouth, dad," said his son, independently. "I heard you admit that you drugged George Melville and then robbed him of his money belt containing \$20,000."

Mr. Skinner regarded his son with a livid face, but Simon took no notice of his emotion.

"Jacob Luckstone caught you at the trick and you had to give him \$5,000 to buy him off. Now he's back after more, and you've agreed to give him \$2,500. You seem to be in a nice pickle, blessed if you aren't."

"How—did—you—learn—all—that?" gasped out Mr. Skinner.

"How did I learn it?" snickered Simon. "Why, I was hidden under that window yonder, and I took in every word that passed between you two."

The farmer covered his face with his hands

and sank into his chair at the desk with a heart-broken moan.

CHAPTER V.—The Turning Point of a Life.

Finally Mr. Skinner took his hands from his face and regarded the boy with a look of mute supplication.

"Simon," he said, in a broken tone, "promise me you'll never breathe a word of what you have heard this afternoon. Promise me that. You wouldn't ruin your father, would you?"

"Oh, I won't say a word," replied the boy, with a grin. "But you mustn't boss me about any more."

Thus speaking, Simon walked out of the library, leaving his father alone with his thoughts.

"This is certainly a fierce night," said Will Melville, sitting up in his bed in the loft of the new barn, a hundred feet back of the farmhouse.

Usually he slept like a top from the moment he laid his head upon his pillow until the small alarm clock standing on a nearby shelf woke him up at five in the morning. On this occasion the roar of the storm, which rocked the barn to its brick foundations, invaded his dreams, and finally the banging of a loosened shutter near the head of the bed startled him into wakefulness.

"The river and the creek must be awful high to-night," he muttered, as he hopped out of bed, went to the window and tried to peer through the panes. "I wonder if my boat is safe?"

The dilapidated sailboat which he had tied up as usual in the creek late that afternoon, at the time he was addressed by Jacob Luckstone, and in which he had just then returned from Maywood with certain supplies he had obtained at the general store where the Skinner family traded, was Will's only possession on earth, and he thought a heap of it in consequence. After watching the splashing of the rain against the glass for a few minutes, Will struck a match and looked at the clock. It was just on the stroke of midnight. The boy took another anxious glance out into the night and then returned to bed. But he could not get to sleep again, strive as he would. A spring storm like the one now in progress was always dreaded by the inhabitants of the Arlington Valley, especially when it followed a week of almost steady rain, as this one did. As the moments flew away the storm seemed rather to increase than diminish, and in like proportion Will's anxiety for the safety of his little sailboat increased.

"No use talking, I simply can't go to sleep with this thing on my mind," he said at last, sitting bolt upright again. "I've a great mind to dress and go down to the creek. That old rubber horse blanket will keep me dry enough. I must make sure of my boat. If I should lose that I wouldn't be able to get its mate in a hurry, and about all the pleasure I have in life I get out of it."

So Will jumped out of bed again, hurriedly dressed himself, and, taking the rubber horse cloth from its peg on the wall, ran lightly downstairs. Wrapping the waterproof as snugly about his person as he could, he sallied forth into

the night and storm, through a small rear door of the barn. He expected to be back in a very short time, just as soon as he had hauled his boat up to the head of the creek, and secured her to a stout tree standing near the edge of the bank. Fate, however, decreed that it would be many a day before Will Melville saw the Skinner barn again.

CHAPTER VI.—Saved by a Hair.

The short cut Will took to reach the creek carried him past the old disused barn where Jacob Luckstone had for some hours been sleeping as peacefully as a child. There was no thought of any danger threatening him that night on the Westerner's mind. If the idea had occurred to him he would have laughed it down contemptuously. As Will was about to pass the old barn his watchful eye caught the gleam of a shaft of light through a crack in the door. He stopped short and gazed in wonder at the building.

"I'll take a squint and see who is in there, anyway. If it is a tramp, and he is smoking, I'll have to warn him against the danger of setting fire to the old tinder-box."

Will therefore marched up to the door and peered through a knothole which furnished an uninterrupted view of the ground floor. In the middle of the floor stood a lighted lantern, while some person, whom the boy did not immediately recognize, was piling up the dry straw thickly about the foot of the rough ladder which led to the loft. Great wads of straw had also been heaped upon each step of the stairs. As the man inside turned to gather another huge armful of the straw from a pile in one end of the place, the light of the lantern flashed full upon his ghastly countenance. Will started back in consternation. The face he saw was the face of Amos Skinner.

"Great Scott!" cried Will. "Why is he about to destroy this old barn on such a night and at such an hour? There are a couple of tons of good hay in the loft, too. It isn't at all like Mr. Skinner to sacrifice even a small bit of his property. Why, I've known him to go wild when a short afternoon rain slightly damaged the top of a single haymow. I can't understand this at all. It can't be that he's walking in his sleep and doesn't realize what he is doing."

In some excitement Will kept his eye glued to the knot-hole and watched the incendiary preparations of the owner of the barn. Mr. Skinner seemed to walk about on his tiptoes, as if fearful of making any sound on the board flooring. He continued to heap the straw about the ladder until he had a thick pile as high as his head.

"He seems determined to make a sure thing of it at any rate," breathed Will. "Well, it's his funeral, not mine. If he wants to burn the barn down he has a perfect right to do so if he sees fit, for nobody will suffer but himself."

How different would the boy's thoughts have been if he could have looked into the loft above at that moment. He would have seen a strong man, in the full flush of health, fast asleep on the hay, utterly unconscious of the fate in store for him, and his boyish heart would have stood still with horror. Will, however, forgot all about

the object which had called him from his bed at that late hour in the interest that Mr. Skinner's ominous preparations had excited in his mind. If there was going to be a bonfire he wanted to see it, too, now that he was on the scene.

Mr. Skinner scattered the balance of the straw about the floor and then took up his lantern. He opened the slide and took out the candle. Will wondered at the ghastly look which rested on the farmer's features. Then Mr. Skinner applied the candle flame to the straw in different places. It took fire instantly, and the flames spread with great rapidity, curling up the ladder in red tongues which ignited the batches of straw further up. Will thought it was time for him to get out of range, and he hurriedly jumped behind a big oak tree which threw one of its great branches above the old doomed barn. Mr. Skinner came rushing out as though the fire fiend himself was at his heels, and he threw the door wide open in order to create a huge draft.

"Now, Jacob Luckstone, we'll see who is the winner—you or I? In a few minutes the earth and myself will both be well rid of you forever—forever, do you hear?" he screamed. "It is a thousand pities you have \$200 of my good money in your clothes at this moment. It has got to go, but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that you will go with it. May you wake up in perdition, blame you!"

For the third time Mr. Skinner shook his hand at the loft and then he melted away in the direction of his house. Will had heard every word he uttered, and they seemed incomprehensible to him.

"One would think there was some enemy in that building he was trying to destroy," breathed the boy. "What could he mean by saying, 'Now, Jacob Luckstone, we'll see who is the winner?'" thought Will, watching the sea of fire which now had full swing in the lower floor. "Who is Jacob Luckstone? There's no such person in this neighborhood, I'll swear."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth before he heard a terrible cry for help—and the cry surely came from the loft of the doomed barn.

"Great heavens!" cried Will. "That was a human cry. It sounded from in there, too. What can it mean?"

"Help, help, for the love of heaven!" came in tones of strong anguish through the opening.

"My goodness! There is some one up there. His only chance to escape is to burst open that closed wooden shutter above. Why doesn't he do it?"

The screams of the imprisoned man now grew agonizing. He pounded frantically on the walls and on the closed window shutter, but he did not seem to know how to open the latter from within.

"Help! Help! I am burning to death! Help, in heaven's name!"

"I must help him somehow," cried Will, casting the rubber covering from him. "It must be some tramp who went up there to sleep; but I cannot see even a tramp perish without lending him a helping hand. How shall I reach him? Ah, the tree!"

In a moment Will was shinning up the thick trunk of the great oak. Never before had he climbed a tree with greater speed and energy.

But now he had reason for speed, for a human life was in dire peril. He swung himself out on the limb which extended above the roof of the barn. Dropping down on the wet and slippery roof, he crawled up until he was above the closed shutter of the loft. Letting himself down till his feet were in a suitable position, he began to kick away vigorously at the shutter. The man inside heard him and rushing up to it cried:

"Save me! For heaven's sake, save me! The fire has reached the loft. I am nearly suffocated."

"Turn the bar that holds it, and push the window open."

Luckstone fumbled about through the smoke which was choking him, grasped the wooden bar and tried to turn it. It was stiff, however, from disuse and resisted his efforts. He tugged frantically at it, his breast heaving, and the perspiration standing out on his forehead in great drops.

"I can't get it open," he groaned.

"You must get it open," cried Will. "Your life depends on it. It is your only way of escape."

Inside Luckstone continued his desperate fight for life. His efforts, however, were each moment becoming weaker.

"I'm dying!" he groaned, as he gave a last wrench to the bar just as Will administered a heavy kick from the outside.

The bar came loose, revolved and Luckstone with a gasp fell against it, forcing it partly open. Will kicked it entirely open.

"Now jump out," he cried, preparing to follow himself.

Luckstone was beyond the effort. He lay gasping in the opening, his dazed eyes turned up at the brave boy, clinging to the roof above, while the fire, now at his feet, was catching the edges of his trousers. Will looking down, saw how it was with him. He saw he would have to help the man out or he would be lost. So he let himself down into the window with the help of the shutters. Straddling the sill, he exerted all his strength and pulled and pushed the man out of the window. Luckstone fell all in a heap into the water-soaked grass below. Then, as Will sprang after him, the flames followed him through the window and shot up through the roof, lighting up the vicinity for a hundred feet around.

CHAPTER VII.—What Jacob Luckstone Told Will Melville.

As soon as Will alighted on the ground he seized Luckstone by the arms and drew the half unconscious man away from the burning barn into a cowshed near at hand. By the glare of the fire Will recognized, greatly to his surprise, the man who had accosted him at the creek that afternoon. Luckstone also realized that he was indebted for his life to Will Melville, the son of the man Mr. Skinner had so basely treated out in Cripple Creek, and to which crime he himself was to all intents and purposes an accomplice.

"You have saved my life, Melville," he said, in a weak voice, catching the boy's wet hand in his and pressing it warmly. "I don't deserve this favor of you, my lad, though I'm mighty glad

you came to my assistance. Another minute and it would have been all over with me. I can't understand had the place caught afire. Skinner will be sure to blame it all on me in the morning. He'll say I was smoking, and that I dropped a lighted match in the hay."

"How can he blame you, sir? He couldn't have known you were in the building."

"Couldn't have know it. Why, of course he knew it. Didn't he bring me here himself, so I could pass the night in the loft, as it was impossible for me to walk to the village in this storm?"

"Mr. Skinner brought you here to sleep in the loft of that barn?" cried Will, in the utmost astonishment.

"He certainly did."

Suddenly Will recalled the strange, threatening words uttered by the farmer when he stood for a moment in front of the barn he had just fired. Those words—at least the few the boy could recollect—were to this effect:

"Now, Jacob Luckstone, we'll see who is the winner—you or I? In a few minutes the earth and myself will both be rid of you forever."

Those words were certainly significant of a deadly purpose. Was this man's name Jacob Luckstone? If he was, then the picture looked very black against Mr. Skinner. Will determined to see what light this man could throw on the matter.

"Is your name Jacob Luckstone?" he said, rather abruptly.

"It is," admitted the Westerner.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Skinner?"

"I am."

"He brought you to that barn to sleep, you say?"

"Yes."

"Do you regard Mr. Skinner as a friend?"

"Well, hardly that," chuckled Luckstone.

"Have you any reason to suspect that he would want to injure you?"

"Why do you ask that question, Melville?" the Westerner asked, clearly startled.

"For the best of reasons, Mr. Luckstone," replied Will, gravely.

"What are your reasons?"

"If you will answer my question I will tell you."

"Well, I haven't the least fear that Skinner would try to injure me—he's too much of a coward for that; but I'll tell you frankly that I believe he would hail the news of my death with a great deal of satisfaction."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Luckstone, that you underestimate Mr. Skinner's courage, for it was he who set that barn on fire to-night, and I saw him do it."

"You saw Skinner set fire to that barn? You actually saw him do that?" asked Luckstone, hardly believing the evidence of his ears.

"I did. Listen and I will tell you the whole story."

Will then told Luckstone what he had seen of Mr. Skinner's actions in the old barn which culminated in his setting fire to the building. The man from the West uttered an angry oath when the boy had finished his story.

"The sneaky scoundrel!" he ejaculated. "So he meant to do me up for good! I won't do a

thing to him for this! Thought he'd save that \$2,300 balance, did he? Well, I'll have no mercy on him now. I'll ruin the villain and send him to prison if there's law and justice in this land. Even if it costs me my own freedom to do it. Will Melville, you saved me from becoming a victim to that rascal's perfidy. I mean to show my gratitude by seeing that you get your rights."

"Get my rights! What do you mean?" asked the surprised boy.

"You shall know to-morrow. You shall hear the whole truth."

"The whole truth about what?"

"About the wrong that man did your father out in Cripple Creek."

Will uttered a gasp of surprise.

"Explain what you mean, Mr. Luckstone," cried the boy, grasping the man eagerly by the arm. "What do you know about my father?"

"I won't tell you now. All I will say at present is that your father's death lies directly at Amos Skinner's door, and that much of that man's prosperity was built upon the money that rightfully belonged to your mother and yourself. Skinner has deeply wronged you, boy, and I am sorry to say that I abetted in the transaction for the sake of the money I gained by so doing. But that wrong must now be righted. Skinner shall be made to disgorge. He shall be brought to book for your father's death, and for his attempt on my life to-night. You are my witness for the latter, I will be your witness for the former. Between us, my lad, we will put the villain through."

"Do you really mean that Mr. Skinner was responsible for my father's death?"

"I do."

"And yet I always understood he was my father's friend."

"He was a false, treacherous friend. Your father trusted him and was betrayed."

"I can hardly realize that what you accuse Mr. Skinner of is the truth," said Will, in a troubled voice.

"Haven't your own eyes shown you to-night what Amos Skinner is capable of? Did you not see him go to work with the utmost deliberation to murder me?"

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"I am the only witness who can bring him to book for the crime against your father. I am a dangerous man to his interests. I have him hard and fast under my thumb. For these reasons he naturally wanted to sweep me from his path. He has failed, thanks to you. It was a lucky thing for both of us that you happened to be on hand to defeat his purpose. From this hour I will sink my own interests in yours. I will no longer use my power over that rascal for my own gain, but I will exert all my efforts to see that your father is avenged, and that you shall receive what is justly yours."

"Do you mean to assert that Mr. Skinner defrauded my father of his money, too?"

"I mean to say in the plainest of words that he deliberately robbed your father of his share of the money received from the sale of the Rain-
bow. Claim, the sum of \$20,000."

"Twenty thousand dollars!"

"Ah, \$20,000!"

"How do you know this?"

"Because I caught him in the act of doing it."

"You did. And you never——"

"Brought him to account for it? No, I now regret to say that I did not. Instead of doing that I accepted \$5,000 of that money as the price of my silence."

"You did?"

"I did."

Will regarded Jacob Luckstone with a look of aversion.

"If all you say is true, you are almost as guilty as Mr. Skinner."

"I do not deny it; but your father was almost a stranger to me, and I did not have any part in the plot against him."

"Have I your word for this?"

"You have."

"Do you know how my father met his death? Was he pushed over a precipice?"

"No. Skinner drugged him with a dose of chloral. He asserted that he did not actually mean to kill him—merely intended to stupefy his victim so he could rob him of his money with safety. But I have only his word for this."

"Mother told me that my father was found mangled at the foot of a precipice. Mr. Skinner told her that in his opinion some desperadoes must have learned that my father carried his money around his person in a belt: that he believed they lured him to that lonesome spot, attacked and robbed him, and then threw his body down the mountain to get rid of it. He identified my father's corpse by his clothes."

"A man resembling your father in build and dress was found as you have described and buried in his name after Skinner's evidence was taken; but it may not have been your father just the same."

"May not! Then you have no idea what became of my father after he was——"

"Drugged by Skinner!"

Luckstone regarded the boy with a curious expression for a moment.

"Boy, you shall know the truth. Listen! I took your father in his unconscious condition to my cabin. He was apparently all but dead, and I agreed to bury him secretly as soon as the breath had left his body. Your father, however, did not die!"

"Did not die!" exclaimed Will, in a tense tone.

"No. He came to himself on the following day, but his mind was gone from the effects of the overdose of poison he had received. How long he would remain in that condition I could not tell, but that he would not die seemed certain. This placed me in a quandary. His ultimate recovery would spoil my future plans with regard to Skinner, whom I meant to bleed if I should ever need money. Yet I could not bring myself to complete that rascal's villainy. I had already decided to go to Mexico with my \$5,000. I went, but I took your father with me, for he was as docile as a child."

"You took my father to Mexico!"

"I did. He recovered his health, though his mind remained a complete blank as to the past."

"And where is my father to-day?" cried Will, with feverish eagerness. "Is he still——"

"Alive? Yes, and in excellent health. But Skinner must never know the truth. He must be made to——"

At that moment a terrible roar sounded up the valley. The dam had given way at last!

CHAPTER VIII.—The Flood.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jacob Luckstone, pausing in his last speech and gripping Will by the arm.

The storm was still at its height, while the fire had so far subsided that the rain was beating the last of it into a mass of blackening embers. The boy held his breath and listened. He could hear a mile or more away what seemed to his excited fancy the onward rush of a great body of water. If this was the truth then the big dam had given way and Arlington Valley would soon be flooded from end to end.

"The dam," he said in a hoarse whisper at last.

"What dam? What are you talking about?" asked the Westerner, impatiently.

"The dam above the village I fear has given way."

"Well, s'pose it has? We're not in any danger, are we?"

"We should be swept off our feet by the flood and probably drowned."

"Then let's get somewhere else."

"We'll go to my boat in the creek. I want to attend to it, anyway."

"I'm with you," said Luckstone.

They set out at once for the creek, only a short distance away. Will found his sailboat all right, though the creek had risen more than a foot since he was there that afternoon.

"Get into the cuddy," he said to his companion. "I'll follow you as soon as I hitch the boat higher up."

Will released the boat's painter and pulled the little craft up to the head of the creek, where he fastened the line to a stout tree close to the edge of the bank, now scarcely a foot above the water line. Then he jumped on board and hastened under cover. It was but the work of a few moments to feel for matches, which he always kept in a certain place and light the lantern at the forward end of the cuddy. This gave a bright illumination to the interior. From under one of the lockers he produced a red papier-mache bucket and placed it in the center of the floor. Taking off his jacket he began to squeeze the superfluous moisture into it, and advised his companion to do the same.

"This isn't a bad place to spend the balance of the night," remarked Luckstone, looking about the cozy cuddy. "Whose boat is it, Skinner's?"

"No, it's mine," replied Will, as he hung his jacket up to dry. "Not much to brag of, I'll admit, but still it's all mine—the only thing I ever owned."

As the boy spoke the sailboat, which had been riding uneasily at her moorings, rose up suddenly, as if propelled into the air from underneath. Then she shot backward, as far as her painter would let her go, and fetched up with a jerk that sent both Will and Luckstone sprawling in a heap on the floor. The shock caused the line to snap short off close aboard, and when the boy and his companion picked themselves up both

realized that the boat was adrift. Will rushed to the slide, or cuddy door, which he had almost shut to keep out the rain, shoved it open and looked out. Clearly the little craft was moving along upon the surface of a body of water at a smart pace. Will unshipped the lantern and raised it at arm's length outside the cuddy. By its glow the boy could see an agitated mass of water on both sides. He was now sure that the dam had given way, for nothing but a heavy onrush of water from above the village could have overflowed the creek and torn the sailboat from her anchorage, sending her drifting down the valley at the mercy of the stream. The rain was still coming down in torrents, driven hither and thither by the blast, and the night was so dark that Will had no idea of the extent of the flood. It was useless for him to think of taking measures to guide the craft, so he could not see a yard one way or the other.

"We'll have to take our chances of fetching up against any obstruction that happens to get in our way," he said to Luckstone, as he returned the lantern to its hook. "It is simply a matter of blind luck with us now. I can't tell whether we're on the river at this moment or are moving over the body of the valley. If the former, we're comparatively safe; if the latter, we're liable at any moment to butt up against a building or some kind of a tree, or, in fact, any old thing in our road."

"From the way you put it the prospect isn't over-cheerful," said Luckstone.

"No, it isn't," replied Will.

"Then that dam you spoke about has really gone to pieces?"

"There isn't much doubt about it."

"Ever happen before?"

"Many times."

"Why don't they make the dam strong enough to hold back the water?"

"They've been strengthening it for years, but somehow the water manages to get the better of the situation. This, however, is the first break in three years. It has been the general opinion this spring that there wouldn't be any more floods—that the valley was safe at last; but just the same we're up against it again. Lots of damage will be done before the waters subside."

"That is generally the case with floods. If we don't meet with any——"

Obstruction, he was going to say, but just at that moment the boat ran into some floating object, and the words were choked back down his throat. No damage was done, however. For a while the boat floated on down the submerged valley as before, then with a slight shock she came to a stop. Will went to the cuddy door again and looked out. At first he could see nothing but the opaque darkness around, then he made out the shivering branches of a big tree in which the mast had caught.

"We're anchored in a tree," he said to his companion over his shoulder.

"Will it hold the boat against the tide?" asked Luckstone.

"That is rather doubtful."

"Have you a rope aboard to make fast to the trunk?"

"Yes, I've a spare line," replied Will. "I'll make the boat secure if I can."

"I'll help you," said the Westerner.

Between them they succeeded in securing the sailboat to the trunk of the tree, so that if the flood swung her loose from the branches, as it was very likely to do in time, they would still swing at anchor.

"This is safer than being swept along at the mercy of the water," said the boy after the job had been completed. "We shan't run into anything now and be upset."

"But something may run into us, just as we ran into the tree, and send us to the bottom."

"That's true," answered Will; "but in that case we can climb into the tree, which is pretty solid, I guess."

Removing their soaked garments and wrapping themselves in a blanket apiece, which Will had in a locker, they reclined upon the floor near each other. The rain still beat down on the top of the little cabin with unabated vigor, the driving blast whistled through the limbs of the tree, and the light boat bobbed up and down on the uneasy surface of the water. As the excitement of their situation somewhat subsided, Will was eager to talk about his father in far-away Mexico, but Luckstone said he was tired and wanted to get a little more rest if he could. The boy was greatly disappointed, but as the man wouldn't talk he had to submit for the present. It wasn't long before Luckstone dropped off to sleep, and though Will, conscious of the danger of their position, tried to keep his eyes open, he, too, yielded to the influence of the drowsy god. Fortunately nothing happened to imperil the sailboat during the remaining hours of darkness, and the sleepers were not disturbed.

CHAPTER IX.—A Rescue and a Wreck.

Morning broke at last over the Arlington Valley. What a change had taken place there since the preceding day. The narrow Maple River, which wound down from the northern to the southern end of the valley, had expanded into an inland sea, covering every bit of the low ground in sight. The same old scenes of ruin and chaos which had accompanied the former floods were repeated. The ground floors of a score or more of farmhouses were more or less submerged, while the smaller outbuildings, not so securely fixed to the earth, had become dislodged and floated away with the current. Barns rose out of the water here and there, like Noah's Arks aground, and small orchards showed only their bare branches above the surface. The village of Maywood, being largely built on higher ground, escaped the worst features of the flood, the cellars only being flooded and the streets awash. The storm had partially subsided when Will woke up and went to the door of the cuddy to look out.

It was still raining hard, and the wind was swaying the branches of the tree to which the sailboat was tied. Dark and sullen clouds hung low in the heavens, and the prospect of the weather changing for the better was not encouraging. Still the light of day had banished the greater terror of darkness and uncertainty which had tortured the inhabitants of the valley

since the flood first came upon them like a thief in the night. Will got into his half-dried clothes as quickly as he could, and by that time Jacob Luckstone woke up and proceeded to do likewise.

"How's things this morning?"

"Pretty fierce," replied Will. "The valley is almost wholly flooded. I don't think it was ever worse."

"Whew! What a change in a night!" exclaimed the Westerner when he looked out on the landscape himself. "The village, as near as I can make out, seems to be all right."

"Yes. It is on high ground."

"A lucky thing for the inhabitants. The river has risen to their doors, however. Can you see Skinner's place from here?"

"No. It's around yonder line of trees."

"I s'pose he's flooded out with the rest."

"The fields are under water to some extent, and his cellar is full up, I guess; but he will suffer less than the majority, owing to the lay of his land."

"What are we going to do?"

"Get up sail and make for Maywood."

"All right. I'll help you all I can. We seem to be in for another ducking, for it's still raining good and hard."

Will led the way outside, and Luckstone helped him take the stops off the sail. After that they cut loose from the tree and raised the sail with a couple of reefs in it. Hardly had they got underway before Will caught sight of a woman waving a handkerchief at them from one of the lower windows of a partially submerged house. He could also see a child's face peeping out above the window-sill. The building was about a quarter of a mile away, and seemed in imminent danger of collapsing, for it rocked visibly every time the wind swooped down upon it.

"My gracious! Look yonder," said Will, calling his companion's attention to the house and its two occupants. "We'll have to go to their rescue."

He headed the boat across the stretch of intervening water.

"That building looks as if it was just about to go afloat," said Luckstone.

"That's what it does. And that's just what it will do very soon," answered Will. "It's lucky for them that we are close at hand."

The boy ran the sailboat as close as he could to the window, which was not more than a foot above the water, and, handing the helm over to Luckstone, he grabbed the window-sill with both hands and drew the craft close against the house.

"Now step in, madam," he said to the woman.

"I can't," she replied. "I am crippled. You will have to assist me."

"All right," replied Will. "I'll take the little girl first."

He put out one leg to straddle the sill when a sudden gust of wind tore down on the house, wrenched the boat from under him and left him up to his waist in the flood, clinging to the window.

"Look out," he cried to the woman. "I've got to scramble in."

He performed this maneuver with the agility of a monkey and straddled the window-sill. Then he looked around for the boat and perceived it a dozen yards off, sweeping away on the tide. He

thing to him for this! Thought he'd save that \$2,300 balance, did he? Well, I'll have no mercy on him now. I'll ruin the villain and send him to prison if there's law and justice in this land. Even if it costs me my own freedom to do it. Will Melville, you saved me from becoming a victim to that rascal's perfidy. I mean to show my gratitude by seeing that you get your rights."

"Get my rights! What do you mean?" asked the surprised boy.

"You shall know to-morrow. You shall hear the whole truth."

"The whole truth about what?"

"About the wrong that man did your father out in Cripple Creek."

Will uttered a gasp of surprise.

"Explain what you mean, Mr. Luckstone," cried the boy, grasping the man eagerly by the arm. "What do you know about my father?"

"I won't tell you now. All I will say at present is that your father's death lies directly at Amos Skinner's door, and that much of that man's prosperity was built upon the money that rightfully belonged to your mother and yourself. Skinner has deeply wronged you, boy, and I am sorry to say that I abetted in the transaction for the sake of the money I gained by so doing. But that wrong must now be righted. Skinner shall be made to disgorge. He shall be brought to book for your father's death, and for his attempt on my life to-night. You are my witness for the latter, I will be your witness for the former. Between us, my lad, we will put the villain through."

"Do you really mean that Mr. Skinner was responsible for my father's death?"

"I do."

"And yet I always understood he was my father's friend."

"He was a false, treacherous friend. Your father trusted him and was betrayed."

"I can hardly realize that what you accuse Mr. Skinner of is the truth," said Will, in a troubled voice.

"Haven't your own eyes shown you to-night what Amos Skinner is capable of? Did you not see him go to work with the utmost deliberation to murder me?"

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"Do you mean to assert that Mr. Skinner defrauded my father of his money, too?"

"I mean to say in the plainest of words that he deliberately robbed your father of his share of the money received from the sale of the Rainbow. Claim, the sum of \$20,000."

"Twenty thousand dollars!"

"Ah, \$20,000!"

"How do you know this?"

"Because I caught him in the act of doing it."

"You did. And you never——"

"Brought him to account for it? No, I now regret to say that I did not. Instead of doing that I accepted \$5,000 of that money as the price of my silence."

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"Get into the cuddy," he said to his companion. "I'll follow you as soon as I hitch the boat higher up."

Will released the boat's painter and pulled the little craft up to the head of the creek, where he fastened the line to a stout tree close to the edge of the bank, now scarcely a foot above the water line. Then he jumped on board and hastened under cover. It was but the work of a few moments to feel for matches, which he always kept in a certain place and light the lantern at the forward end of the cuddy. This gave a bright illumination to the interior. From under one of the lockers he produced a red papier-mache bucket and placed it in the center of the floor. Taking off his jacket he began to squeeze the superfluous moisture into it, and advised his companion to do the same.

"This isn't a bad place to spend the balance of the night," remarked Luckstone, looking about the cozy cuddy. "Whose boat is it, Skinner's?"

"No, it's mine," replied Will, as he hung his jacket up to dry. "Not much to brag of, I'll admit, but still it's all mine—the only thing I ever owned."

As the boy spoke the sailboat, which had been riding uneasily at her moorings, rose up suddenly, as if propelled into the air from underneath. Then she shot backward, as far as her painter would let her go, and fetched up with a jerk that sent both Will and Luckstone sprawling in a heap on the floor. The shock caused the line to snap short off close aboard, and when the boy and his companion picked themselves up both

realized that the boat was adrift. Will rushed to the slide, or cuddy door, which he had almost shut to keep out the rain, shoved it open and looked out. Clearly the little craft was moving along upon the surface of a body of water at a smart pace. Will unshipped the lantern and raised it at arm's length outside the cuddy. By its glow the boy could see an agitated mass of water on both sides. He was now sure that the dam had given way, for nothing but a heavy onrush of water from above the village could have overflowed the creek and torn the sailboat from her anchorage, sending her drifting down the valley at the mercy of the stream. The rain was still coming down in torrents, driven hither and thither by the blast, and the night was so dark that Will had no idea of the extent of the flood. It was useless for him to think of taking measures to guide the craft, so he could not see a yard one way or the other.

"We'll have to take our chances of fetching up against any obstruction that happens to get in our way," he said to Luckstone, as he returned the lantern to its hook. "It is simply a matter of blind luck with us now. I can't tell whether we're on the river at this moment or are moving over the body of the valley. If the former, we're comparatively safe; if the latter, we're liable at any moment to butt up against a building or some kind of a tree, or, in fact, any old thing in our road."

"From the way you put it the prospect isn't over-cheerful," said Luckstone.

"No, it isn't," replied Will.

"Then that dam you spoke about has really gone to pieces?"

"There isn't much doubt about it."

"Ever happen before?"

"Many times."

"Why don't they make the dam strong enough to hold back the water?"

"They've been strengthening it for years, but somehow the water manages to get the better of the situation. This, however, is the first break in three years. It has been the general opinion this spring that there wouldn't be any more floods—that the valley was safe at last; but just the same we're up against it again. Lots of damage will be done before the waters subside."

"That is generally the case with floods. If we don't meet with any—"

Obstruction, he was going to say, but just at that moment the boat ran into some floating object, and the words were choked back down his throat. No damage was done, however. For a while the boat floated on down the submerged valley as before, then with a slight shock she came to a stop. Will went to the cuddy door again and looked out. At first he could see nothing but the opaque darkness around, then he made out the shivering branches of a big tree in which the mast had caught.

"We're anchored in a tree," he said to his companion over his shoulder.

"Will it hold the boat against the tide?" asked Luckstone.

"That is rather doubtful."

"Have you a rope aboard to make fast to the trunk?"

"Yes, I've a spare line," replied Will. "I'll make the boat secure if I can."

"I'll help you," said the Westerner.

Between them they succeeded in securing the sailboat to the trunk of the tree, so that if the flood swung her loose from the branches, as it was very likely to do in time, they would still swing at anchor.

"This is safer than being swept along at the mercy of the water," said the boy after the job had been completed. "We shan't run into anything now and be upset."

"But something may run into us, just as we ran into the tree, and send us to the bottom."

"That's true," answered Will; "but in that case we can climb into the tree, which is pretty solid, I guess."

Removing their soaked garments and wrapping themselves in a blanket apiece, which Will had in a locker, they reclined upon the floor near each other. The rain still beat down on the top of the little cabin with unabated vigor, the driving blast whistled through the limbs of the tree, and the light boat bobbed up and down on the uneasy surface of the water. As the excitement of their situation somewhat subsided, Will was eager to talk about his father in far-away Mexico, but Luckstone said he was tired and wanted to get a little more rest if he could. The boy was greatly disappointed, but as the man wouldn't talk he had to submit for the present. It wasn't long before Luckstone dropped off to sleep, and though Will, conscious of the danger of their position, tried to keep his eyes open, he, too, yielded to the influence of the drowsy god. Fortunately nothing happened to imperil the sailboat during the remaining hours of darkness, and the sleepers were not disturbed.

CHAPTER IX.—A Rescue and a Wreck.

Morning broke at last over the Arlington Valley. What a change had taken place there since the preceding day. The narrow Maple River, which wound down from the northern to the southern end of the valley, had expanded into an inland sea, covering every bit of the low ground in sight. The same old scenes of ruin and chaos which had accompanied the former floods were repeated. The ground floors of a score or more of farmhouses were more or less submerged, while the smaller outbuildings, not so securely fixed to the earth, had become dislodged and floated away with the current. Barns rose out of the water here and there, like Noah's Arks aground, and small orchards showed only their bare branches above the surface. The village of Maywood, being largely built on higher ground, escaped the worst features of the flood, the cellars only being flooded and the streets awash. The storm had partially subsided when Will woke up and went to the door of the cuddy to look out.

It was still raining hard, and the wind was swaying the branches of the tree to which the sailboat was tied. Dark and sullen clouds hung low in the heavens, and the prospect of the weather changing for the better was not encouraging. Still the light of day had banished the greater terror of darkness and uncertainty which had tortured the inhabitants of the valley

since the flood first came upon them like a thief in the night. Will got into his half-dried clothes as quickly as he could, and by that time Jacob Luckstone woke up and proceeded to do likewise.

"How's things this morning?"

"Pretty fierce," replied Will. "The valley is almost wholly flooded. I don't think it was ever worse."

"Whew! What a change in a night!" exclaimed the Westerner when he looked out on the landscape himself. "The village, as near as I can make out, seems to be all right."

"Yes. It is on high ground."

"A lucky thing for the inhabitants. The river has risen to their doors, however. Can you see Skinner's place from here?"

"No. It's around yonder line of trees."

"I s'pose he's flooded out with the rest."

"The fields are under water to some extent, and his cellar is full up, I guess; but he will suffer less than the majority, owing to the lay of his land."

"What are we going to do?"

"Get up sail and make for Maywood."

"All right. I'll help you all I can. We seem to be in for another ducking, for it's still raining good and hard."

Will led the way outside, and Luckstone helped him take the stops off the sail. After that they cut loose from the tree and raised the sail with a couple of reefs in it. Hardly had they got underway before Will caught sight of a woman waving a handkerchief at them from one of the lower windows of a partially submerged house. He could also see a child's face peeping out above the window-sill. The building was about a quarter of a mile away, and seemed in imminent danger of collapsing, for it rocked visibly every time the wind swooped down upon it.

"My gracious! Look yonder," said Will, calling his companion's attention to the house and its two occupants. "We'll have to go to their rescue."

He headed the boat across the stretch of intervening water.

"That building looks as if it was just about to go afloat," said Luckstone.

"That's what it does. And that's just what it will do very soon," answered Will. "It's lucky for them that we are close at hand."

The boy ran the sailboat as close as he could to the window, which was not more than a foot above the water, and, handing the helm over to Luckstone, he grabbed the window-sill with both hands and drew the craft close against the house.

"Now step in, madam," he said to the woman.

"I can't," she replied. "I am crippled. You will have to assist me."

"All right," replied Will. "I'll take the little girl first."

He put out one leg to straddle the sill when a sudden gust of wind tore down on the house, wrenched the boat from under him and left him up to his waist in the flood, clinging to the window.

"Look out," he cried to the woman. "I've got to scramble in."

He performed this maneuver with the agility of a monkey and straddled the window-sill. Then he looked around for the boat and perceived it a dozen yards off, sweeping away on the tide. He

shouted to Luckstone to starboard the helm, but the man from the West was all at sea in a sailboat. He didn't know the first thing about managing one, and seemed to be as helpless in the craft as an infant.

"Your boat is leaving us," exclaimed the woman, in anxious tones.

"I'm afraid my companion doesn't understand how to handle her," he said. "My gracious! She's over!" he cried, in some excitement.

Another blast had pounced upon the sailboat and capsized her, throwing Luckstone into the water. He caught hold of the boom, however, and the last seen of him and the boat, as they were swept far down the stream, showed him to be in the same position, holding on for dear life.

"Oh, what shall we do?" cried the woman, in a paroxysm of fear. "This house may tumble over any moment, and we shall all be drowned."

"I hope not, ma'am," Will tried to reassure her. "It rocks some, but I think the storm is blowing over."

The room was a complete wreck. The lighter portions of the furniture were overturned and almost entirely covered by the water. The plaster on the walls was cracked in a dozen spots, and in one place a couple of square feet of it had fallen out altogether. The pictures still hung from their nails, but they were all askew. Although the boy tried to make the situation look as cheerful as he could, yet in his own heart he feared the building was going to collapse very soon. He went to one of the other windows and looked out to see if there was the ghost of a chance of escape in that direction, but he couldn't see any. From certain well-defined indications the water seemed to be over his head. Suddenly he saw two men in a rowboat a short distance away. They were pulling down toward a big house half a mile distant. Will threw up the window and shouted to them until at length he attracted their attention. They immediately altered their course and stood for the house.

"There's a boat coming for us," said the boy, dashing across the room to the spot where the woman and the child sat on the top of a table.

They did not hear him, however, for at that moment a sweeping blast struck the building so violently that Will felt the house lift up and shift its position. It settled down again at an angle, as if a portion of the foundation had given way, and there it rocked to and fro. The woman and child both screamed with affright. They seemed to think the building was about to sink under the water. Will grabbed the woman's crutch and, placing his arm under her, told her to cling to his neck. Then he caught the little girl by the hand, bade her jump into the water, and thus encumbered started for the opposite window as the building reeled once more under another blast. The crippled woman clung to Will in a state of abject terror.

Just when the wobbling house seemed on the point of turning completely over into the rushing waters, help suddenly appeared at the open window. The crippled woman, perched on the brave boy's shoulder, and the little girl uttered a glad cry. One of the men in the boat stood up, seized the window jambs and steadied the craft, while the other endeavored to overcome the sweep

of the tide with the oars. Will soon reached the window with the helpless woman and little girl. He passed each in turn carefully through the window to the man outside, who placed them in the center of the boat. Then Will leaped on the sill to follow, when the roaring wind once more came sweeping down on the house. As he grabbed the window to steady himself the house went over on its side, throwing him into the water, and he was swept away like a cork.

CHAPTER X.—Bound West.

Will was a good swimmer and thus managed to keep himself afloat as soon as he came to the surface. How long he could have managed to do this, impeded as he was by his clothes, is a question, but fortunately he was not put to the test, for a log came within his reach pretty soon and he seized hold of it. This buoyed him up and he allowed things to take their course, as he could not very well do otherwise. He was swept down the valley with the other debris on the stream. He saw several boats rowing to different houses, but he was too far off to attract their attention. The rain beat down on his face and the wind buffeted the log, but through it all the boy clung to it desperately as his only salvation. Mile after mile he was carried along in this fashion, until he became sensible of a growing feeling of exhaustion. Once he tried to get astride of the log, but it rolled over and dumped him off on the opposite side, nearly shaking him from his hold.

When he reached that stage that he feared he could hold on no longer, he made out the top of a small shed swimming just ahead of him. Here was a chance not to be neglected. Summoning all his remaining energy, he abandoned the log, swam to the shed, and pulled himself on top of it. Quite exhausted, he stretched himself upon it, and, heedless of rain and wind, he lay there for fifteen minutes without stirring. At last he sat up and looked around. He was now miles down the valley from the neighborhood of Maywood. On every side there were evidences of the severity of the flood. He saw a raft at a distance with a whole family and a part of their household belongings heaped upon it. One rowboat he saw also loaded with women and making for the nearest shore. The storm seemed to be breaking up, for the wind wasn't quite so strong as before, and it had ceased raining. The sky, however, looked as threatening as ever. For an hour longer the shed held on its course in the middle of the stream, then as it approached the end of the valley it drew close in to the shore, at a point where the Maple River itself turned a spur in the hills.

"I might as well stick to this craft as long as it floats, for I wouldn't know where to walk to if I landed down here," said Will to himself. "Besides, if I keep on I may eventually come up with Mr. Luckstone, if he was not drowned. The whole object of my life now is to reach Mexico and meet my father. I am afraid I never will be able to accomplish my purpose unless I can come across that Westerner again. He seems to be friendly toward me and disposed to work in

my interest. It is probable if we miss each other he will return to that country. In that case I must go there, too, and hunt around until I can find some trace of him."

Will had not a very clear idea how he would be able to reach Mexico, which was thousands of miles away; but he had confidence in the old adage that where there is a will there is a way. After passing the bend in the stream the shed was carried out from shore again, and for hours kept on its course till it reached the main part of the Maple River. A few miles below Will was carried by a big manufacturing and railroad town. Here he was discovered by a sloop bound down the river and rescued from his precarious situation. He was half famished by this time, and glad to accept the rough hospitality offered by the skipper of this craft. He told the story of the flood in the Arlington Valley so far as he was acquainted with its details, and the captain promised to land him in the morning at Reedsburg, a good-sized city, whither the sloop was bound.

He was advised to turn into a spare bunk in a dark hole forward, which was called the fore-castle, and was glad to avail himself of the suggestion. Next morning at ten o'clock he stepped ashore at Reedsburg, a stranger in a strange place, and without a penny in his pocket. He had now given up all hope of an immediate meeting with Luckstone.

"The only thing I can do is to work my way to Mexico. It may take me some time to do that, but I'll get there all right," he muttered pluckily. "The first thing I must do is to capture a job of some kind. I've got to eat or starve, and I s'pose it's up to me to work for my victuals."

It wasn't easy for a strange, ill-attired boy to pick up employment in a place where he was a total stranger. Will tried hard that afternoon to get something to do, but was unsuccessful. Hungry and tired, he stopped before a small eating-house just as the shades of night were falling and looked wistfully in at the door at the people at the tables. Finally he mustered up the courage to strike the proprietor for a sandwich.

"You want something to eat, do you?" asked the man, who was taking money behind a small counter.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you willing to work for it?"

"I am."

"Well, I am short-handed and can give you a job washing dishes."

"I'll take it," said Will eagerly.

The proprietor called up a waiter and told him to take the boy into the kitchen and turn him over to the cook as a helper at the dish trough. Will worked pretty steadily and satisfactorily for two hours and a half, and was then given his supper and twenty-five cents. One of the waiters took him to a cheap lodging-house where he put up himself, and Will spent fifteen cents for a bed. Next morning after spending the remaining dime for a cup of coffee and a plate of rolls, Will started out to hustle for work again. He was not successful, and late in the afternoon found himself near the freight yards of a trunk railroad line. He struck up an acquaintance with a boy who was also hanging

around the yard, and they had quite a talk together.

"So you want to get to Mexico, do you?" grinned the boy.

"I do," replied Will.

"That's a long way off. It's a tough country, I've heard. Nobody lives there but Greasers."

"Who are Greasers?" asked Will, innocently.

"That's a kind of nickname for the Mexicans," replied his companion. "Some of them are a low-down set. I wouldn't go there if I was you."

"I have a reason for wanting to go there," said Will.

"How are you going to get there without money?"

"I've been looking for work to make some ever since I landed here yesterday, but I haven't caught on to anything yet."

"Had anything to eat to-day?"

"Nothing but coffee and rolls this morning."

"Well, come over to the house with me. My mother will give you something to eat. Then maybe I can put you on to something that'll help you on your way."

Will, glad of a chance to get anything in the shape of food, accompanied his new acquaintance to his home, which was a small cottage hard by the yards. The boy, whose father was employed in the freight yard, introduced Will to his mother and stated why he had brought him there. She was a thoroughly hospital Irish woman, and soon spread a substantial repast before the hungry boy. After Will had eaten all he could, she put up a package of food for him at her son's request.

"Now we will go back to the yard," said Will's new companion.

They did so.

"The quickest way you can get West, for you have to go West to reach Mexico, is by rail, and the cheapest way to go by rail is to beat your way," grinned the boy.

"Beat my way? What do you mean?"

"Don't you know what beating your way is?"

"No," replied Will, shaking his head.

"There are various ways of doing it. It's a favorite way of travel for tramps. It is rather unpleasant, and often rather dangerous; but I think I can fix you all right so far as Cincinnati, at any rate. You see that freight car yonder?"

"Yes."

"It's an empty belonging to the C. H. & D. road, and goes back to Cincinnati on that train they've been making up this afternoon. The train pulls out of the yard at seven to-night. That car door isn't locked. All you've got to do is to get into that car, close the door again, and then you'll be as snug as you please till you want to get out again. I think mother put up enough stuff to last you as far as the car goes. At any rate, I hope it won't give out too soon. It all depends on your appetite. Don't eat too much at a time, but try to make it last."

"But I haven't any right to steal a ride on that car," objected Will.

"Don't you worry about that. The car has got to go back anyway. What's the difference if you go inside of it. Your weight won't hurt the rails any," he chuckled.

Will allowed himself to be persuaded, as he was very anxious to go West as soon as he could,

so when the freight train pulled out of the yard at 7:10 our hero was dozing away in the corner of freight car No. 999, in the middle of the long line of cars.

CHAPTER XI.—Stranded In Mexico.

It was a long and slow ride to Cincinnati on the freight, and though Will husbanded his food he finished the last mouthful nearly twenty-four hours before he reached the destination of car No. 999, consequently he was a famished boy when he finally left the freight yards of the C. H. & D. road. He showed the effects of his long fast in his face and in the shaky condition of his limbs; in fact, he soon felt so faint and sick that he had to sit down on the steps of a nearby house. It was quite early in the morning, and a milkman going his rounds, noticing his appearance, stopped and asked him if he was sick.

"No, I'm not sick, but I'm half starved. I haven't had anything to eat or drink since yesterday morning, and not much to speak of then," replied Will, in a hollow voice.

"Well, you look it," answered the milkman. He stepped back to his wagon and got a quart measure of milk.

"Drink it down," he said, handing the can to Will, and then he passed around into the back yard of the house.

"I've a sandwich in the wagon I'll give you, too," he said, when he came back.

He brought it to Will.

"That ought to put new life in you for a while," he remarked.

The boy bit into it voraciously, finishing it in half a dozen bites.

"That tasted good, I can tell you," said Will, drawing a breath of relief. "I'm awfully obliged to you. I feel better already."

"Of course you do. I only wish I had something more to give you."

"You've done a lot for me as it is," replied Will, gratefully.

The milkman continued on his route, and Will, feeling like a new boy, though he was still hungry enough to get away with a pretty big meal, started to walk down into the business section of the big city. He was fortunate enough to see a man in a commission house hanging out a sign marked "Boy Wanted," and he immediately applied for the position. The fact that he was a stranger in the city almost spoiled his chances, but he put up such a strong plea that he was finally taken on trial. He went about his new duties in such a bright and earnest way that he produced a favorable impression in the store.

There was only a dollar coming to him at the end of his first three days' services, as he had been compelled to draw something every day to support himself. The merchant, however, appreciating his situation, advanced him half of his next week's wages of \$6, and that carried him through until the next pay-day. After that it was plain sailing for him, and he began to save a little each week. Although Will was extremely anxious to get to Mexico in order to find some trace of Jacob Luckstone, whom he was pretty confident had not perished in the

Arlington Valley flood, still prudence told him not to sacrifice the position he had obtained until he had at least accumulated money enough to help out the great object of his life. Therefore Will stuck to the commission house, doing his level best to please his employer. In this he succeeded so well that in six months he was promoted to a better situation in the store, and his pay was raised to \$8 a week.

Four months later, another vacancy occurring, he received his second promotion and a raise to \$10. During the first six months he had not been able to save very much, as he had clothes and many other things to buy, which made a hole in his small surplus; but with his first raise he began to do very much better, and now, when he was advanced to \$10, his savings commenced to assume a very satisfactory appearance in his bankbook. He was getting on very nicely, with the prospects of a further promotion in the house, when, through a heavy embezzlement on the part of the cashier, Will's employer failed and he was thrown out of work.

With \$230 in his pocket Will decided he would no longer delay his long-contemplated trip to Mexico. It is true he realized that he was bound on something of a wild-goose chase, as he had only a vague notion of the mountainous district where he hoped to find Jacob Luckstone; but he had plenty of energy and courage, backed by an inward conviction that he would surely succeed in the end.

Therefore, it was without the slightest misgivings that he purchased a ticket to El Paso, and boarded a Santa Fe train for the southwest. When Will arrived at the Mexican border town he found that it was a long, rambling sort of settlement, extending along a fertile and narrow valley upon the Rio Grande. The population was of a nondescript character, principally Mexicans of the ordinary type and Americans of the rough-and-ready variety. Will put up a two-story wooden edifice called the Rio Grande Hotel. He began making inquiries about Jacob Luckstone, whom he described according to his recollections of a year or so previous. Nobody seemed to have known such a man, though the boy made a pretty thorough canvass of the settlement during the week he stayed there. This was rather a discouraging beginning of his Mexican anticipations. But worse was to come. A tough specimen of a Texan accosted him one day as he was coming out of the hotel.

"I heard you were asking for a man named Luckstone," he said, in a friendly way.

"Yes," said Will eagerly, "Jacob Luckstone. He must have passed through this town a year or more ago, and probably hung around a day or so waiting for a train bound East."

"What sort of looking man was he?" asked the Texan.

Will described Luckstone.

"I was talking to such a man three months ago. His name was Luckstone, too. Come here for supplies from a place called——"

The Texan paused and appeared to be trying to recall the name of the place.

"Was it in the mountains?"

The man noticed the eagerness with which the boy asked the question.

"Sure it was," he grinned. "Up in a spur of the Sierra Madre range."

"How far from here?" inquired Will.

"Well, now you've got me. I remember he took the Mexican Central to Carmen. That's about 150 miles south of this place, and is the nearest town on the railroad to the range."

"How far are the mountains from Carmen?"

"A hundred miles, I guess. Carmen is the place for you to go. If you'll stand the expense I'll go there with you. I'm well acquainted in that town, and I'll bet I'll be able to locate your man."

"All right," agreed Will, with alacrity.

A train was scheduled to leave for the City of Mexico at three that afternoon, and when it pulled out of the depot Will Melville and his new acquaintance, who said his name was Bart Bradley, were aboard. A run of something over four hours landed them at Carmen. It was dark when they got there, and Will permitted Bradley to pilot him to a one-story adobe building on the suburbs where he said he was acquainted and where they could put up for the night. Although Will was not particularly tired when they sat down by themselves to a dirty table, in an ill-kent and ill-lighted room, to partake of a meal served by a villainous-looking peon, yet the boy had hardly finished his coffee before he began to experience a drowsy feeling that he found impossible to shake off. His next recollection was waking up on a bed, in a small, filthy, whitewashed room, the smell of which suggested anything but the odor of roses, with the morning sun shining through a windowless hole in his face. He immediately became conscious of two things—that he had a splitting headache and that he was fully dressed.

"How came I here in this shape?" he muttered, in a perplexed way. "One would think I was drunk last night, and that Bradley brought me to this room and left me, just as I was, to sleep it off."

As Will had never touched a glass of intoxicating drink in his life, he knew there must be some other cause for his present condition. What could that cause be?

"The last thing I remember is sitting at the supper-table with Bart Bradley. I must hunt him up and see what was the matter with me."

Getting up, he soused his head in a bowl of water, which kind of brightened him up a bit. Then he made his way around to the front of the building, where he saw a man in a sombrero and a soiled suit of clothes sitting in the sun lazily smoking a cigarette. Judging that he belonged to the house, Will asked him as to the present whereabouts of Bart Bradley. The man regarded him with a curious stare and then shook his head. Either he couldn't speak English, or was unable to give the desired information.

Will then entered the house and passed through several rooms before he came to another person, who happened to be the hard-looking peon who had waited on them the night before. Will obtained no better results from him. He now recollected that Bradley had spoken to the people of the house in Spanish, so he began to have grave doubts if he would be able to make himself understood. After helping himself to a drink

of water, Will motioned to the peon an intimation that he would like something to eat.

The man nodded and uttered the English word "money" plain enough. Will thrust his hand into his pocket, where he supposed he had a handful of the current coin of the country, and was surprised to discover that his pocket was empty. He tried his other pockets in succession, while the Mexican watched his futile efforts to produce the needful.

"Good gracious!" the boy exclaimed at last, with a blank look on his face, "what has become of my money? Why, I haven't a cent about me."

A sardonic grin came over the peon's features. Will noticed it, and like a flash the truth dawned across his mind. He had been robbed the night before.

CHAPTER XII.—Will Goes to Work for the Mexican Central Railway.

"This is the toughest deal I've been up against yet," breathed Will, feeling as discouraged as a boy could feel. "I must find Bart Bradley and tell him what has happened to me."

But he didn't find Bart Bradley anywhere about. He hung around the neighborhood for a couple of hours, but his new acquaintance didn't turn up. Then at last he began to suspect that he had been the victim of a put-up job from the first.

"What a fool I was to trust such a man as Bradley, anyway!" he ejaculated disconsolately. "The savings of sixteen months gone in a moment. What am I to do now? In a strange country, where I don't even understand the language, and not a single penny in my clothes. This is certainly the limit. Little chance now of finding Jacob Luckstone, and unless I can locate him I shall never be able to meet my missing father."

Will started for the main part of the town, hoping to run across somebody who understood English, to whom he could explain his plight and ask for temporary help. The railroad track seemed to offer the shortest cut, so he started along the ties. He had only proceeded a short distance before he saw a familiar sight to American eyes—a bunch of section-hands working on the roadbed. They were all natives of the country, however, except one man who appeared to be the foreman. To Will's great delight this individual looked like an Irishman, though he addressed the gang in Spanish. It was not very good Spanish, it is true, but the man understood him, and Will certainly didn't know the difference. As the boy came up the foreman looked at him curiously.

"You speak English, don't you?" asked Will, halting in front of him.

"Faith, I do whin it's not Spanish I'm wrestling wid. It's an American yez are, I kin see wid half an eye. What kin I be afther doin' fer yez?"

"Well," said the boy, encouraged by the friendly attitude of the man, "I'm in a bad hole."

"A bad hole, is it?" replied the foreman, with a look of interest. "How's thot?"

Will gave him an outline of his object in coming to Mexico, and then explained how he had

run across Bart Bradley in El Paso; how that individual had induced him to come to Carmen on the previous evening's train, and what happened to him since he arrived in the town. The Irishman listened to him with a great deal of attention, and when the boy had finished his story, said:

"Sure, it's as plain as the nose on yer face thot thot rascal worked yez for yer money."

"I'm afraid he did," acknowledged Will, ruefully.

"Of course he did. He took yez to one of the worst places in the neighborhood, dosed yer coffee an' thin wint through yer clothes at his leisure. An' are yez dead broke now?" in a sympathetic tone.

"I haven't a cent, and don't know where I'll get one. I am in a fair way to starve unless something turns up."

"Don't worry about starvin', me boy. It's mesilf'll see thot yez'll get somethin' to ate, so I will. Here, take this. It'll provide yez wid a breakfast," and he handed Will a small Mexican silver coin. Yez'll foind an atin' house beyant the station. Go an' fill up, then come back this way an' we'll talk it over, an' maybe I'll be able to help yez a bit."

"Thank you," replied Will, gratefully. "What is your name?"

"Me name, is it? Mike Doyle. An' what's yours?"

"Will Melville."

"Where do yez hail from?"

"Maywood, West Virginia."

"Well, run along now, an' don't forget to come back. Yez'll find us not a great way from here up the line."

Will hurried down the road till he came to the station. He had no difficulty in finding the eating-house, which was run by the railroad company, nor in making his wants understood for the waiters spoke English. Within an hour he was back again at the new spot where the section hands were at work. The men had their crowbars under the ties some distance ahead, and Mike Doyle was bending down taking a sight along the rail to make sure that the track was quite level. He motioned to the gang, whose heads were turned toward him, and they began to heave again at their bars, growing red in the face under the strain. Presently he made another motion with one of his arms. Some of the men braced themselves and held on to their bars, while others hastened to stamp some gravel solidly under the ties to keep them in place.

Doyle, at leisure for a moment, turned around and noticed Will standing a few feet away.

"It's back yez are, I see," he said, pleasantly. "I've been considerin' yer case, Melville. Are yez able to do a little hard worruk?"

"I'm as strong as any boy my size, and perhaps stronger than most, for I worked two years on a farm before I came West. I'm ready to tackle any kind of labor in sight, and will be glad of the chance to get it. When a fellow is on his uppers he has either to hustle or go to the wall."

"Thot's right, especially whin he's in a country where he can't spake the language. Well," continued the foreman, inspecting Will's muscular and well-built form with much satisfaction, "I'm

a man short, and if yez are willin' to tackle the job, which ain't no sinecure, I can tell yez, and the pay is low—but thin it don't cost much to live in Greaser-land—why, I'll put yez to work. If yez don't fancy the job yez kin throw it up to-night."

"I'll accept your offer, Mr. Doyle," said Will, eagerly.

"Good; but don't Mr. Doyle me, if yez plase. Me name is Mike, an' thot's whot yez want to call me, do yez mind?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, Mike, yez mane. Now, put yer jacket on the handcar over there, get a pick an' shovel, and I'll tache yez the ropes."

Will was back in a moment with the tools. Mike Doyle took the boy over to the group of Mexicans.

"Now watch me, and it's a good section-hand I'll soon be afther makin' of yez."

The work of straightening the track began again, and soon the lad was hard at it with the others. He soon discovered what tough work it was. To raise the rigid track the fraction of an inch required the straining of every muscle in his body to the cracking point. To replace a tie was a task that tried every nerve and sinew. The almost tropical sun beat down relentlessly on the boy's head, bringing out the perspiration in streams. But Will kept at it bravely, determined that no Mexican should outdo him. Doyle nodded approvingly as he noted the boy's efforts, and occasionally spoke a word of encouragement to him.

"Don't thry to do too much, me lad," he said, with a grin. "Let the Greasers do their share. They're lazy enough at the best, heaven knows. It's a hard job to get the worruk out of thim, anyway."

After a while Doyle took out his watch, held it for a few minutes in his hand, and then gave the word to knock off for dinner. All hands went in a body to the hand-car, where their dinner-pails were, and then the Mexicans sat down in the shady side of it and commenced to eat. Doyle took Will with him over to a nearby tree, and under its protecting branches they squatted down together.

"I've enough for two here an' to spare," said the foreman, removing the top from his American-made dinner-pail. "First of all, take that tin pail ye see on the car and go down the road a bit till yez come to a crik. Fetch it back full, for it's nothin' stronger than that we'll get to drink hereabouts."

Mike Doyle spoke truly when he said he had plenty of provisions in his pail. The railroad eating-house where he boarded supplied his wants in that direction bountifully. Will ate all he wanted, drank half of the water in the pail, and they lay back against the tree perfectly satisfied. Doyle lit his pipe and began to smoke. Between puffs he told Will something about the Mexican Southern Railway, and how he happened to come down into Mexico to work. Will also told him about his hopes of meeting his father some day, provided he was so fortunate as to run across Jacob Luckstone, who held the key to the situation.

"Ye think this Luckstone is somewhere in the mountains, do yez?" said Doyle.

"Yes."

"The Sierra Madre is the nearest range to this spot—about 100 miles or so due west. But it's a mighty long range, do yez mind? Unless yez knew just where to hunt for yer man it'd be like lookin' for a needle in a hay-stack, so it would."

At one o'clock work was resumed on the road-bed until two. Then it was discontinued until four, when it was taken up again until dark. Several trains passed in either direction that afternoon, and Will viewed them with considerable interest. When the order came to knock off for the day the hand-car was put on the rails, the tools piled upon it, and all hands getting aboard two of the Mexicans seized the levers, and in a moment the car was spinning down the track toward Carmen.

CHAPTER XIII.—At Last.

Mike Doyle decided to take Will to room with him, and he made arrangements at the eating-house for the boy to board there. Will was very grateful to Doyle for the interest he took in him and told him so.

"Don't say a worrud, me lad. Sure, I couldn't do less for a fine American boy like ye are, stranded in a haythen country loike this. Just hould yer whist, an' take whatever comes yer way."

In a week Will had mastered the fine points of section work so well that Doyle made him his chief assistant. In this manner three months passed away. One afternoon Doyle came to Will and told him the division superintendent wanted to see him in his office on the following morning.

"Why, what does he want to see me for?" the boy asked, in surprise.

"Faith, it isn't for me to say, but it's my opinion he's got a betther job for yez than whot yez are doin'," replied the foreman.

Will reported at the superintendent's office next morning.

"You're younger than I thought you were," remarked that official, when he had sized the boy up. "How long have you been on the road?"

"Three months, sir," replied Will, respectfully.

"What road did you work on before you came to Mexico?"

"I never worked on a railroad before, sir."

"Never worked as a section-hand before you came here, and you've only been three months in our employ, yet Doyle has recommended you as a thoroughly competent man for the foremanship of a gang."

The superintendent knitted his brows and looked hard at Willi.

"Do you think you're able to fill the bill?" he added, after a pause.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, promptly.

The official, who once upon a time had been a section foreman himself on the Chicago & Alton road in Illinois, began to ask Will a number of questions about the duties of the position, all of which he answered to the superintendent's satisfaction. The result was that the boy was appointed on trial. He was sent to the section

below Carmen, and had no great difficulty in making good. Although it was a source of great pleasure to him to know that he was giving satisfaction to the company that employed him, he never forgot for a moment the object which had brought him into the country. Often he would gaze in the direction of the great Sierra Madre range, and wonder if his father was still alive, and if so in what part of those mountains he and Jacob Luckstone were located.

It did not seem to occur to him that circumstances might have taken them elsewhere during the interval of nearly two years which had now elapsed since the flood at Maywood. Will met Doyle every night after the day's work was over, and Mike proved to be a stanch friend and a cheerful companion. Thus six months more passed away, and Will was approaching his eighteenth year. One evening Will and Mike Doyle attended a Mexican celebration at a big hacienda a few miles out of town. There were six or seven hundred people connected with the hacienda in one capacity or another, and consequently what with the visitors who had been invited to take part in the festivities there were all of a thousand persons on the spacious grounds after nightfall.

The long, rambling two-story building, said to be three hundred years old, was gayly decorated and lighted up, while fancy lanterns strung from the trees made the grounds nearly as light as day. There was music and dancing and fun galore, especially for the young people, who enjoyed themselves as only young persons can do.

A pretty senorita had managed to capture Will, and he was airing his imperfect Spanish at her, greatly to her amusement. She on her part was flirting most desperately with him, and trying her best to make him understand her language. They were sitting in a shady nook not far from the house, with a wide open space directly before them filled with promenaders, when suddenly the boy's attention was attracted to a well-dressed man who was making his way through the crowd as if he was taking his departure from the place. There was something strangely familiar about this person's figure and side face that set Will's heart to beating quickly, and he tried to get a better look at him, much to the senorita's vexation, for she imagined Will was interested in some rival beauty.

As the stranger reached the edge of the trees his face, which at that moment he turned in Will's direction, came into the full glow of a cluster of lanterns. The boy started up suddenly as though he had received an unexpected electric shock, for the face he saw was surely the countenance of Jacob Luckstone. He was sure he could not be mistaken. With a little gasp of excitement Will was on the point of dashing forward for the purpose of intercepting him, when the Mexican maiden by his side grasped him by the arm and detained him.

Will was too much of a young gentleman to shake her off rudely, and he turned to try and explain matters to her. But between his excitement and his bad Spanish he made a mess of it. But he finally got the girl to understand that he would return in a moment or two. Luckstone, if it was indeed he, had disappeared. Will,

however, darted off in the direction the man had taken, believing he could easily come up with him. He did not succeed in doing so, or even getting another sight of him. The man had taken one of the numerous by-paths out of the grounds, and so to the boy's intense chagrin he lost him altogether.

Will finally returned to the senorita, whom he found waiting for him, but the girl was much provoked to find that a change had come over his spirits, and that his subsequent gaiety was largely forced. Later on Will met Mike Doyle, and told him about the incident.

"Well, me b'y, the fact that he was here on these grounds shows that he ought to be known to Senor Martinez, or some member of his family. The best thing yez could do is to make inquiries about him. Ask the Don if he knows Luckstone, and if he does the rest ought to be aisy, for he can probably be able to put yez on his track."

"I'll do it," cried Will, in eager excitement, and he started off at once to hunt up the proprietor of the hacienda.

He found Senor Martinez surrounded by a group of friends, and he took the first chance to ask for a few minutes' private conversation with him. The Don could converse very fluently in English, and this was of great advantage to Will, who would have had some difficulty in expressing in Spanish all he wanted to say.

"Will you tell me, Senor Martinez, if you are acquainted with a man named Jacob Luckstone?"

"Yes. Senor Luckstone and myself are very well acquainted. He was here all the afternoon; in fact, up to a short time ago, when he left to return to his mines in the Sierra Madre."

"You can tell me where those mines are situated, Senor Martinez, can you not?" cried Will, his eyes blazing with suppressed excitement.

"Why, yes. I have visited them. They are not as yet very productive, but still the prospects are quite bright, especially of late, as Senor Luckstone told me this afternoon. Are you thinking of going there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you must go by way of San Jose. That is sixty miles from here to the northwest. There is a good road all the way to Los Saucillos, an ancient village in the foothills, sixty-five miles west of San Jose. The region all about there was full of silver in the days of the Spanish possession. At Los Saucillos they will point out the road you are to take up into the range. It leads direct through a wild section of ravines and gorges to a dark hole in the mountain. This is the entrance to one of the principal silver deposits in the time of Cortez, known as La Veta Negra, or the Black Vein. It was exhausted more than a century ago; neither gold nor silver is found there now. A mile beyond La Veta Negra are the mines of Senors Luckstone and Melville."

"Who did you say?" cried Will, seizing Senor Martinez by the arm. "Melville?"

"Yes," replied the Mexican, surprised at the boy's emotion. "Do you know him?"

"Know him? I should think I did! He is my father."

CHAPTER XIV.—The Black Vein.

Will Melville was a happy boy that night when, in company with Mike Doyle, he returned to their lodgings at Carmen. He knew that his dear father was alive and well, and that only a trifle over a hundred miles separated them. He possessed full directions for reaching the Sierra Madre mines, owned and being worked by Jacob Luckstone and his father in partnership. A stout Mexican horse, which Senor Martinez had promised to lend him, would take him there in about two days, and then he could hardly bear to think of the great joy and satisfaction that would be his to see and speak to his father once more—the father he had for so many years thought to be dead.

"But do you think your father will know yez?" asked Doyle, regarding the boy curiously.

"Know me! Why should he not?"

"Well, ye see, in the first place yez was a mighty small b'y whin he went away to Cripple Creek. Thin ye remimber yez tould me that this Jacob Luckstone said that yer father had lost all thrack of the past."

"That's true," replied Will, his countenance dropping. "If he doesn't know me, what shall I do?" and the tears came into the lad's eyes.

"There now, don't yez be down-hearted. Perhaps the soight of ye will bring back his ould remimbrance. At any rate, yez say Luckstone is friendly toward ye, and promised to do the square thing by ye. Bechune the pair of yez a way may be found to bring things roight."

"I hope so. I do hope so," said Will, fervently.

"The first thing yez must do is to get lave of absince from the super. Sind yer request the first thing in the mornin' wid yer r'asons for wantin' to get off. He'll fix it for yez all roight whin he understands the case."

"I will," replied Will.

"That's roight, an' may good luck attind yez, me b'y."

On the following afternoon Will received leave of absence for a week, and next morning early he started for the Martinez hacienda. Senor Martinez was expecting him, and had the promised horse ready.

"I have a message to send to Senor Luckstone," he said. "Therefore I will let one of my people accompany you. That will save you the trouble of inquiring your way, for he will take you direct to the Sierra Madre mines, as he is acquainted with every foot of the way."

Will said that would suit him immensely. Senor Martinez sent for the man, whose name was Pedro, and introduced him to Will.

"You shall breakfast with us before you start on your journey," said the senor with true Mexican hospitality.

Although the boy had eaten before he left Carmen, he was easily persuaded to sit down with the family to a second breakfast, which was not over until eleven o'clock. Fifteen minutes later he and Pedro set off on horseback for the distant Sierra Madre range.

That evening they stopped at another hacienda, where they were hospitably received, as coming from Senor Martinez. At ten o'clock next morning they rode into San Joe. They stopped only

long enough to partake of some refreshments, and then resumed their journey in the direction of the village of Los Saucillos. Pedro spoke English well enough for Will to understand all he said, and as he was a talkative old fellow, he kept the boy's ears well employed listening to his stories, many of them weird tales of the mountains they were approaching. They put up for the night at a roadside house, with the people of which Pedro was well acquainted. After a light breakfast they started on again, reaching Los Saucillos early in the forenoon.

They made no stop at this place, except to water the horses and take a light luncheon of fruit. From that point the balance of their journey would be more or less uphill. As they left the village behind them, Will noticed that the sky looked somewhat peculiar, and he called his companion's attention to it. Pedro said it might mean a storm or it might not; at any rate, he guessed they would reach their destination some time before any such thing happened. The horses were allowed to take their own time, as they ascended the low reaches of the range. For some time they had a splendid bird's-eye view of the plain below, stretching far away toward the railway, one hundred and thirty-five miles distant, then as they penetrated the fastnesses of the mountains the view became contracted and wild in the extreme.

A succession of ravines and gorges now confronted them, and the bridge path, worn smooth centuries before by the silver-laden mules of the aborigines, was their only guide to the region they were aiming for. As they mounted slowly upward, winding around the foot of some loftily precipice, and anon traversing the almost inaccessible heights of a narrow pathway cut out of the mountain-side ages before by the Indians, with only small patches of the hazy-looking sky above them, Will was overpowered by the wild grandeur of the scene so new and strange to his young eyes. In was in the midst of a deep-wooded gorge that they began to notice the darkening of the sky, and heard strange sounds in the air from afar.

"We must hasten," said Pedro, to whom such tokens of a mountain storm were quite familiar. "We will have no more than time to reach the Sierra Madre mines before it will be upon us."

The sky grew darker and more threatening as they proceeded. The air at present was almost preternaturally still; but it was only the calm which preceded the war of the elements soon to burst over their heads. Far away brilliant flashes of light lit up the opaque clouds, and the grumbling of the thunder sounded more menacing than Will ever remembered to have heard before.

In spite of Pedro's anxiety to drive ahead, the growing darkness and precarious nature of their path around the canyon, yawning hundreds of feet below, prevented the animals from proceeding at a greater speed than a sharp jog trot. They could see the storm rushing down upon them at a terrific pace.

"We'll never be able to reach the mines before it's upon us," said Will, glancing fearfully over his shoulder, as they drew near to the wide shelf in front of the opening to La Veta Negra.

The scene was terribly weird to Will, who had

never met with anything at all like it before. The stillness of the canyon, the semi-twilight in the air, at two in the afternoon; the black masses of electrically charged clouds, massed in most unearthly-looking shapes; the heavy rumbling thunder, and, most disquieting of all, the roar of the wind which had not yet reached them. It was as if some huge monster from the other world was rushing down upon them, breathing fire from his eyes and suppressed rage from his mouth, while he lashed the air with his gigantic wings. The suspense was nerve-racking, but it was soon over. Hardly had they reached the plateau and Pedro, with a hoarse, unintelligible shout to Will, headed his animal for the hole in the mountain-side, than the storm swooped upon them with a fierceness that left no doubt in the boy's mind that had they been caught anywhere along the face of the canyon wall their fate could easily have been foreseen.

The rain descended in torrents, and was blown so far into the cavernous opening that Pedro and the boy had to retire some distance into the black depths of the mountain. Pedro, like the majority of his class, was extremely superstitious. He had heard in his infancy that the famous La Veta Negra was peopled with gnomes and wicked spirits of all kinds, ruled over by a demon called "Mina-padre," and consequently he had always given it a wide berth whenever he came into that part of the range. Now that he and Will had been forced to enter it to save their lives, his fears of the place came upon him with a fresh and overpowering force, and he crouched down against the wall of the rock, looking fearfully about him as the red glow of the lightning without lit up the interior of the mine in a weird and startling manner.

Will was bothered by no such feeling. The mine was like any other opening into the ground to him, except that his curiosity to explore the depths of this famous one-time silver lode, untouched and presumed to have petered out ages ago, was considerable. As the moments went by and the storm without continued as terrible as ever, the boy found their enforced idleness very monotonous. Rolling a bunch of paper he had with him into the shape of a torch, he started to examine the mine as far as he could go. He proceeded further and further into the depths of the mine, which slanted downward at an angle of forty-five degrees, but nothing save the bare rock greeted his eye—not a trace could he see of the course of the wonderful black vein which two centuries or more ago had made this mine one of the most famous of Mexico.

"I must go back," he said to himself, as his torch showed that it could last only a little while longer. "The black vein is evidently a thing of the past."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth before a terrible crash sounded above, and tons of splintered rock rained around him and fell away from one side of the mine. At the same time the whole interior was lighted up with a most unearthly glow, while the mountains shook as if in the throes of an earthquake. It was all over in a moment, but the shock had stretched Will unconscious upon the mass of debris, and there he lay, silent and motionless, long after the storm had passed away and while Pedro,

stricken with a terrible fear, was urging his own horse and the riderless one toward the Sierra Madre mines, a mile and a quarter away.

CHAPTER XV.—To the Rescue.

Will Melville lay for many hours insensible in the impenetrable darkness of the La Veta Negra mine, surrounded by the shattered fragments of tons of rock. At last his consciousness returned. In a moment or two recollection reasserted itself, and his experiences up to the moment he had been struck down passed across his mental vision as clear as sunlight.

"I suppose it was a thunderbolt which penetrated the mountain. Nothing else could have raised such a glare and rumpus down here. I wonder how long I have been unconscious? Not long, I guess, or Pedro surely would have come down here looking for me. The worst of the storm seems to be over, for I don't hear a sound of it down here any more. Now the question is which direction shall I take to get out of here."

Will struck a match to get an idea of his surroundings. Its momentary glare gave him a brief glimpse of the ruin which had been wrought by the thunderbolt. He saw the blackened edges of his paper torch peeping from under a mass of debris. That reminded him that he had the other half of the paper still in his pocket, so he took it out, twisted it tightly, and lit it. As he swung the improvised torch aloft he noticed the glittering character of certain portions of the rock which had been dislodged from the side of the mine. Examining them more closely, he saw they were streaked with thick veins of a silvery hue. He looked up at the shattered wall, and it seemed to be fairly alive with the same whitish streaks standing out in a dark-colored rock.

"My gracious!" Will exclaimed in some excitement. "Can this be silver ore? Is it possible that the thunderbolt opened up a new lode in the black vein? If so, then I have made a wonderful discovery in this old deserted mine. If it is silver, isn't it mine by right of finding? I'll take a few specimens of this stuff with me. Mr. Luckstone is an expert and will be able to tell at a glance if this is the real or not. It will be a great thing for me if this is silver."

Will filled both of his pockets with the best of the small specimens he could see, and then turned his attention to the task of getting out into the air again. He followed the upward slant of the hole, and soon turned into the main corridor, which gave him a view of the entrance to the mine. He had no further use for his torch and trampled it under his feet. As he approached the front of the mine he was surprised to see no sign of Pedro or the horses either.

When Will reached the mouth of the entrance, whence he could see the whole of the plateau, he was much surprised because there was no sign of Pedro or the horses.

"Why, where could he have gone? Surely he would not desert me in the midst of the mountains."

But though the boy looked sharply on every side, he found not the slightest evidence that his late companion was anywhere in the vicinity.

"Well, this is tough. I really don't know what I had better do. From the looks of the sky I should say it was much later in the afternoon than I had any idea of. If I only carried a watch I should be able to tell the time of day it is. I must have been longer down in the mine than I supposed. Pedro, of course, heard the crash of the thunderbolt, and not seeing me return within a reasonable time he jumped to the conclusion that I was overwhelmed by the concussion, and not having the courage to venture after me to investigate, he has probably carried the story of my supposed death to Mr. Luckstone. I guess that must be it, for it would account for his disappearance with the horses."

Will had made a pretty close guess at the truth. At that very moment Pedro was telling his story to Luckstone and half a dozen other interested auditors, the gist of which was that the American boy had accompanied him on this trip up into the range, and taken shelter with him from the storm in the old La Veta Negra mine, had recklessly ventured to explore the mine, and had been carried off, by the spirits who guarded the place.

"What was his name?"

"His name? Ah, yes, I remember now, it was Melville."

"My heavens!" Luckstone exclaimed, in some excitement. "Could it have been my partner's son, whom I've never been able to get the slightest trace of since we were forcibly separated that morning in the flooded Arlington Valley?"

He made Pedro go all over his story again.

"Why didn't you go down into the mine and hunt him up when he failed to return? Why did you desert him?"

"Go down into La Veta Negra, senor!" cried Pedro, in a tone of consternation, at the same time hastily crossing himself. "I would not do that for all the silver in these mountains."

With a snort of disgust and contempt Luckstone turned to the other listeners.

"Boys," he said, "that young fellow whom I suspect to be the son of my partner, George Melville, and of whose whereabouts I have tried in vain for the past two years to get some trace of, may have been caught by a cave-in down in the Black Vein. It does not follow that he was killed or even seriously injured, yet at the same time he may be held a prisoner behind a mass of dislodged rocks in the dark. We must go at once to the old mine and make a thorough search for him. We owe it as a duty to Mr. Melville, who has not seen his son in ten years."

"Aye, aye, Mr. Luckstone. We're with you," cried the other enthusiastically.

In fifteen minutes a rescue party was all ready to start for the Black Vein mine.

CHAPTER XVI.—Conclusion.

Will Melville, satisfied that Pedro had gone on to the Sierra Madre mines after the storm had blown itself over, decided to follow the trail or path on foot. He had proceeded perhaps three-quarters of a mile when he heard the sound of horses' hoofs approaching. In five minutes the horsemen came into view, riding quite smartly down the ravine. As they came close upon him

the boy recognized the man who rode in advance. It was Jacob Luckstone. Will rushed up and grasped the bridle of his horse.

"Mr. Luckstone," he exclaimed eagerly, "don't you know me?"

"Will Melville, by all that's lucky!" cried Luckstone, slipping out of his saddle and grasping the lad by the hand.

"Yes, sir; I'm Will Melville all right. I've come to meet my father.

"You shall see him right away. Why, we were on the way to the Black Vein mine to look for you. Pedro, under whose guidance you came into the mountains, turned up at the Sierra Madre half an hour ago with the story that you had been lost in the depths of the Black Vein during this afternoon's storm. The superstitious old chap insisted that the Mina-padre had got hold of you."

"It doesn't look as if he had, does it?" laughed Will.

"Well, hardly," chuckled Luckstone. "I never was so glad to see any one in my life as I am to meet you, my lad, and right here, too."

"Same here," replied Will. "I've been on a still hunt after you for two years. But it was like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"And we—your father and I—have been searching the States for a trace of you, too. The Pinkertons have had the case in hand for nearly a year—in fact, ever since your father recovered his right senses."

"What!" cried the boy, joyfully, "is father all right again?"

"He is—as good as he ever was."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Will, feeling like standing on his head through sheer delight.

"Start back, boys," said Luckstone, waving the men to their horses. "The boy and I will follow on foot. Where the dickens did you disappear to after the boat carried me away that morning?" continued the man, turning again to Will.

"I was going to ask you the same question," replied the boy.

"Oh, I was driven ashore about five miles down the valley. From there I made my way along the foothills above the flood line to Maywood. I put up at the hotel and waited till the storm blew over, which it did about noon. Then I started out to hunt you up, but not a trace could I find of you. I waited around Maywood for a week, by which time the flood had greatly subsided. A fierce lot of damage had been done by the water, I can tell you. I had almost come to the conclusion that you had been drowned when I saw a paragraph in the local paper that stated that a boy, who gave his name as Will Melville, and said he lived near Maywood, had been picked off a floating shed by a sloop, way down the Maple River near Carrolton, and landed at Reedsburg. I hustled to that town, but could find no trace of you. Then I came back to Maywood and called on Amos Skinner. I accused him of trying to burn me up in the old barn. He denied it. I said I had a witness, however, and would produce him unless he came up with double the amount I had assessed him for that evening when I made my first call. The bluff worked, in connection with the hold I already had on him, and he gave me \$5,000. With this in my pocket

I came back here and purchased the Sierra Madre mines for the joint account of your father and myself. It wasn't long after that when your father recovered his memory. He was astonished to find himself in Mexico. I let him have the whole story of Skinner's crookedness, his wife's death, and your disappearance. It broke him all up, I can tell you. After a time he insisted he must return to the States, and see if he could get any trace of you. He went to Maywood and presented himself before the panic-stricken Skinner. What occurred between them I'll leave for him to tell you by and by. At any rate, he made Skinner stump up his \$20,000 with full interest, without any deductions for what I had squeezed him out of. That left the old rascal pretty flat. Then your father consulted the Pinkerton Agency, and offered them a reward of \$5,000 to find you, which they are still trying to earn. Having nothing more to do he came back here, and has been here ever since, hopefully expecting that he would get word about you at any moment. That's about all I can tell you in a rough way. Now, my lad, let me have your story."

Will was glad to tell Luckstone of his adventures and endeavors to get ahead since that fateful morning when the flood parted them in the Arlington Valley, and had barely concluded his narrative when the party reached the Sierra Madre mines. The reunion of father and son was very touching, and the reader may well believe they had lots to say to each other. It was not till Will retired that night that his thoughts recurred to the silver-streaked stones he had in his pocket. The first thing he did next morning was to show them to his father.

"Why, where did you pick up these specimens?" asked Mr. Melville, in some excitement. "It is purer silver ore than anything we have taken from Sierra Madre so far."

Will told him. Luckstone was summoned to a consultation at once. When he heard the boy's story he became greatly excited, too. Horses were brought out, and the party of three visited the La Veta Negra. Will's accidental discovery of silver ore in the Black Vein proved to be of the greatest value. Before it was made publicly known George Melville obtained possession in his own name from the Mexican government of the La Veta Negra.

When everything had been satisfactorily arranged a force of peons were put to work in the mine, and the ore that soon came to light astonished the country. All the profits, of course, went to Will, and to-day he is one of the richest young fellows in the State of Chihuahua, being worth several millions, with twice as much more in prospect. He lives with his father in a splendid modern hacienda on the suburbs of the village of Los Saucillos, where it is said that the prettiest of Senor Martinez's daughters will ere long rule as mistress. And so wishing him every happiness, we leave him as a boy, who, rich though he is, is still Doing His Level Best.

Next week's issue will contain "ALWAYS ON DECK; or, THE BOY WHO MADE HIS MARK."

CURRENT NEWS

FINDS AN \$8,500 PEARL

According to an official report issued by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labor of the Mexican Government, Jorge von Forstal, a veteran pearl fisher of Lower California, has found a seventeen and one-half carat pearl valued at 17,000 pesos (\$7,500).

Pearl fishing in the southern portion of Lower California, about the port of La Paz, which has been dormant for some time, boomed as a result.

HORSE KILLS ITS OWNER

Giles Goodell, 78, hermit farmer of Lakeport, on Oneida Lake, N. Y., is dead as the result of being trampled under the hoofs of one of his horses. His body was found beside the wreckage of a stoneboat. The horse, which had been attached to it, was running wildly about the farm.

The antics of the horse attracted the attention of John Michaels, a neighbor, who found the body.

When Mr. Michaels saw his neighbor last Goodell told him he was going to haul some debris on his stoneboat.

OLD BUT SPRY

William Mackay, of Sydenham, an outlying district of London, is eighty years old, but that does not deter him from celebrating his birthday in a Spartan manner. No cakes and candies and feast days of Mr. Mackay. On the morning of his eightieth birthday William arose at 5, and, leaving the rest of his household peacefully sleeping started on a twelve-mile walk to the Highgate Bathing Ponds. At 8 o'clock he was in the water, and, to use his own words, "as fresh as a daisy."

This energetic Londoner celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday in the same way, and intends to do the same thing at eighty-five. He is very glad his birthday falls in March. "I hate summer bathing," he says, "there's hardly room to kick. Whereas in March there's no crowd."

Another wonderful Londoner, though of a slightly different type, is Mrs. Gambrill, aged seventy-four, who has just resumed her dancing lessons, after an interruption by a trip to Monte Carlo! Mrs. Gambrill is ambitious. She is not satisfied with modern fancying, and so has taken up a course of ballet dancing, toe dancing and physical training.

LOOK BOYS, LOOK!

Did you know that "Mystery Magazine" now contains more stories than it ever did? And they are crackerjacks!

Just to show you, read this list of contents for No. 156, on all newsstands:

"THE MEDICINE DROPPER"

A detective novelette by G. P. WILSON

"WITH EYES AND NOSE"

A two-part story by RALPH E. DYAR

"WHAT DOES YOUR HANDWRITING TELL?"

A special article by LOUISE RICE

TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY

An article by POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD

AND THESE STORIES AND ARTICLES:

"STICK TO YOUR PRISONER," by Jack Bechdolt; "THE STRING," by Crittenden Marriott; "THE SHADE'S MYSTERY," by Dr. W. J. Campbell; "TRAPPED BY CHANCE," by Joe Burke; "THE CAGE," by Hamilton Craigie; "THE CRIME DETECTOR," "ROBBERIES INCREASE INSURANCE RATES," "TRUTH SERUM," "MENTAL CURE FAKERS," "FIND ALLEGED SWINDLER," "JAIL PRISONERS GET NARCOTICS," "THE METHODS OF SCOTLAND YARD" and "SECRET SERVICE WARNS OF COUNTERFEITS."

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Rob and the Reporters

— Or, —

Hustling for War News by Wireless

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER IV.

Rob's Fortunes Take A Most Unexpected Turn.

"Those were the fellows!" French then said.

"And they came in Mr. Garvey's car," continued Rob, "and now, Mr. Finch, I have a confession to make. I am not a fit person to be employed here. I have been bribed by Garvey to give him the censored war news," and he went on to tell the whole story, including what Garvey said about Brown.

For a few minutes Mr. Finch paced the floor in silence, then, turning suddenly upon Rob, he said:

"Rob, give me your hand. I believe every word you have said. The best of us yield to temptation at times. In your prompt admission of the wrong you started in to do you have shown yourself a man. Brown shall be instantly discharged. If you care to take his place it is at your service."

"I'll take it," replied Rob, quietly, "and I promise you, Mr. Finch, you will never have any cause to complain of me."

It was an immense relief to Rob.

Now he felt like a man again.

Mr. Finch began asking him a great many questions, and some of them very personal, it seemed to Rob.

The conversation was spread over two hours and more.

Meanwhile, Mr. Finch had telephoned to a livery stable for a carriage, which came and took Harry French home.

Messengers kept coming in; Rob worked as he talked.

"You certainly understand your business, Rob," said the manager at last, "and now," he added, "I'll take your place for a while. I want you to write me a good two-column story based on the war news you have been receiving. I have a reason. Can you do this?"

"Why, certainly, sir, if you wish it," replied Rob, puzzled to imagine what was in the manager's mind.

"Sit down there at my desk," said Mr. Finch. "You will find plenty of paper. Don't be too flowery, now. Lay yourself out to do it in your best newspaper style. By the way, have you been accustomed to reading the Earth?"

"It's the paper I have always read since I came to New York," replied Rob.

"Good! Write it in their style."

And with the rain, which had now started up again, beating against the windows, and the wind howling outside, Rob scratched away with his pen until he had turned out copy enough to fill

two columns, Earth measure, so far as he was able to guess at it.

Mr. Finch then ordered him back to the receiver, and putting on a pair of eyeglasses sat down to read what he had written.

"This is all right, my boy," he said at length. "It is terse, to the point, and well expressed."

He sat down at the desk, wrote a brief note, and inclosed it with the manuscript in a long envelope, after which he lit a cigar and, leaning back in his chair, said:

"Rob, in making that confession, you have shown yourself a man, as I remarked before. In yielding to that scoundrel Garvey, situated as you are, you only did what nine men out of ten would have done; nevertheless, it was all wrong. Don't think I am justifying it, but it isn't every man who would have the courage to go back on himself when he came to realize his error."

"I don't believe I could have rested quiet another instant thinking about it, sir," said Rob meekly. "The first sight of poor French settled it."

"Exactly," continued Mr. Finch. "Now, listen here. You certainly understand your business as a wireless operator, and I could use you to the company's advantage; but I happen to have a friend who needs a young man of your sort badly and who will pay a great deal better for his services than our company. As soon as Brown comes you go back to the hotel, get your breakfast and an hour's sleep, then go to New York and deliver this letter and the inclosure to Mr. Joseph Torrence, at the office of the Earth. He is the friend I mentioned. I think there is no doubt that you will hear something to your advantage. If not, return here, and I will give you a steady job."

"Do you mean that he may put me on the Earth as a reporter?" asked Rob, greatly elated.

"Not that," replied Mr. Finch. "Don't ask me any more questions, my boy. I neither want to raise your hopes nor to give away Mr. Torrence's private business. Now, I am going back to bed."

The storm passed with the night, morning dawning clear and cool.

Mr. Finch was up before Brown, the day man, put in his appearance.

"Say nothing to him about the French affair," he cautioned Rob. "I shall have to keep the rascal on for a few days till French is able to return to his duties. Whatever talking there is done I prefer to do myself. By the way, you will probably want to look in on French and see how he is. Do so. So long as you reach the Earth office by three o'clock it will be all right. Torrence generally leaves there by half-past."

Rob found French in bed, resting more easily than might have been expected. A doctor had dressed his wounds and pronounced his condition in no way dangerous.

"All the same, Randall, I believe I should have died if you hadn't come to me," the young man declared. "I never shall forget it. I'm right glad that Finch took you on. Brown and I never could pull together. I shall be glad to see the last of him."

(To be continued.)

GOOD READING

WEALTH OF NATIONS

The following table shows the estimated total wealth of leading nations:

United States	\$320,803,862,000
United Kingdom	120,000,000,000
Germany	Unknown
France	90,000,000,000
Italy	35,000,000,000
Japan	22,500,000,000
Canada and Australia	27,000,000,000
Belgium	11,000,000,000

WHITE-ROBED NEGROES TO PRAY

Prayers will be said by a delegation of negroes dressed in white and assembled before the halls in which the Democratic and Republican conventions are to be held on the opening days in New York and Cleveland. The negroes' committee, headed by Dr. Julia P. H. Coleman, meet at the Hotel McAlpin to complete arrangements.

An announcement by the committee said it was hoped that the prayers would have a good effect on the choices to be made by the two conventions. The prayers will be broadcasted by radio.

SLOW EARTH MOVEMENT SWALLOWS UP HOUSES

Spain's greatest scientists have been attracted to the situation at the village of Monachil, where the earth still moving, carrying everything in its path, and in some instances swallowing up in their entirety olive grooves and houses. The center of the disturbance is about 1,500 meters in length and 500 meters wide. The movement of the earth is gradual, but hardly perceptible to the eye.

Thus far there has been great loss to crops in the affected district. In one instance a cottage has been slid along by the earth's movement without damage a distance of about 200 meters.

GERMAN DOCTOR DEFENDS DANCING AND GAMBLING

Dr. Bruno Altmann thinks the epidemic of dancing fever which has followed the great war is far better than the mental disorders suffered by the people after previous conflicts. For example, he says, one of the sadest manifestations was the examples of overwrought nerves which have followed wars from the time of ancient Greece down to the last century was the suicide mania.

The present dance craze and gambling fever are far better, in his opinion, and show that mankind is coming to have better self-control. After the Thirty Years' War the fear of ghosts became epidemic in Germany and continued for many years. Dr. Altmann points out, and he says there is a similar trend now in the disposition of many to have fortune tellers or spiritualistic mediums attempt to pry into the unknown for them.

TALKS BURGLARS OUT OF STEALING

Frank W. Stanton, lawyer, of No. 1131 St. Nicholas Avenue, New York, adjoining Washington Heights Court, told police of West 152d Street Station he had talked two burglars out of robbing him of \$4,000 in jewels late Saturday night.

He was returning from a boxing match to his home, he said, when he saw lights in his apartment. Suspecting burglars, he cried: "Don't shoot, I've got my hands up!" as he entered. He found the burglars had taken a pearl necklace, diamond pin and diamond studded wrist watch.

"Go ahead, I won't resist," he said to the intruders. "The joke's on me, but I've been defending guys like you nineteen years."

"What do you mean?" one of the burglars asked him.

"Well, I'm Frank Stanton, criminal lawyer," he replied.

"Prove it," said one of the thieves.

Then, Stanton told police, he showed the men cards and letters, whereupon one of the burglars exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be blowed. Here, take your stuff back. We wouldn't rob you."

"If I had talked to them ten minutes longer I believe I would have had their bank rolls," the lawyer said.

He added he did not recognize the burglars, although he thought it possible they might have been among clients he has defended.

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INTERESTING RADIO NEWS AND HINTS

NEW RADIO INVENTION

Major Edwin H. Armstrong disclosed before the Institute of Radio Engineers a new radio invention, the super-hetrodyne, which he has so simplified that an amateur can operate it successfully.

With this receiver located in Maine and operated by a woman, London and Pacific Coast stations were received with complete audibility.

PENCIL MARK GRID LEAKS

To adjust a pencil mark grid leak and increase the resistance, rub off some of the pencil line with an eraser. To decrease the resistance make more line. The adjustment should be made while the set is in operation. Increase and decrease the resistance until the signals are loudest.

THE BATTERY SWITCH

In assembling a new radio receiver the constructor would do well to make use of an "A" battery switch. This is a simple, inexpensive little device, and will be found to be a very useful accessory.

There are only two binding posts on a battery switch, and the connections to them can be made without difficulty.

SUPPORTS FOR SHELF

When constructing a two-stage amplifier or a receiving set, with a two step amplifier, use the jacks as the brackets to support the shelf on which you mount the sockets and transformers. This may be easily done by removing the two machine screws that are in the jack and replacing them with longer screws and nuts. The jacks will then serve as excellent shelf supports and save you time and money.

A RADIO WEDDING

A "radio wedding" is the newest matrimonial novelty. Otto Praulson, formerly of Hooper, Neb., now a teller in the Illinois Merchants Bank, Chicago, and Miss Georgia Brolley of Wildwood were married while Station WDAP broadcast the wedding march from "Lohengrin," recently.

The bride's brother, George Brolley, who is a radio enthusiast, arranged with WDAP to broadcast the march exactly at 8 P. M. As the couple stood before the Rev. O. Schweldler the strains of the march were repeated by the air waves.

As a surprise to the couple, WDAP followed the wedding march with "I Love You Truly."

TO BUILD A WAVE METER

A wave meter may be made as follows: Mount a .001 variable condenser on a hard rubber panel and get a box large enough to accommodate it. Attach a honeycomb coil mounting on face of panel, connecting the terminals of the mounting to the variable condenser. Plug in a 50-turn honeycomb coil, and your meter is ready. Tune in a station, whose wave length is known, place the honeycomb coil in close inductive relation to the secondary, and turn the wave meter condenser. When the signal decreases, the wave meter is in resonance. Note this setting, and proceed in the

same manner with other stations. If the wave meter is desired for a transmitting set, include a crystal and phones, as in a common crystal receiver. Calibrate it with a standard instrument.

RADIO BROADCASTING DISCUSSED

The problems that have been worked out by the radio broadcasting stations since the world began tuning in were discussed by W. E. Harkness, assistant vice-president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

The public prefers first class symphonic music over all other, Mr. Harkness declared, though jazz by good orchestras comes a close second. This opinion is based on reports sent in from persons of all ages and material wealth, who are included in the 750,000 instrument owners within a 100-mile radius of New York. With each instrument having four listeners, he said, there was a radio audience of 3,000,000 within that area.

More and more the broadcasting stations must sell their services to persons willing to pay for the spreading of a message, Mr. Harkness explained, but the entertainment features would have to be kept up in order to hold the audiences. WEA, the American Telephone and Telegraph sending station, has had a quarter of a million requests for the sending privileges, he said.

GROUND AND AERIAL NEED CARE

A few pointers regarding the installation of the receiving set should prove valuable to every owner of a radio outfit. As a matter of fact one need pay little attention to the installation of the simple sets for the reason that their simplicity limits their efficiency so that the finer details hardly apply to them. When it comes to the more expensive outfits it is well to give a little thought to the installation for the purpose of obtaining the highest efficiency.

The receiving apparatus should be placed to permit the shortest possible leads from the antenna and ground connections. The lead-in should be as short as possible. Sufficient space should be provided between the instruments and the operating table to simplify the manipulation of the receiver.

The antenna leading from the lightning switch should pass through an insulator or through the wall. The ground wire, number 14 in size, should be brought in as carefully. If those two points are given the care they deserve a large amount of the losses incident to the average receiving set will have been overcome.

FOR POOR TUNERS

The wave trap is becoming more and more of a necessity in connection with sets which do not tune sharply and in localities where there are two or more transmitters at work on almost the same wave lengths. Fortunately, the wave trap is a simple contraption and may be readily made or purchased complete at a low cost. The simplest kind of wave trap consists of a shellaced tube three inches in diameter, on which are wound ten

turns of No. 18 double cotton-covered wire to serve as the antenna circuit. Around this winding is placed a layer of insulation, say oiled muslin, and a winding of 35 turns of No. 26 double cotton-covered wire. This second winding is connected to the terminals of a 43-plate or .001 mfd. variable condenser. The first winding is connected to the antenna and ground, just the same as the receiving set. In fact, it is shunted across the terminals of the receiving set. Such a wave trap serves to "trap" undesired signals, which are tuned in for the closed oscillating circuit consisting of the second winding and variable condenser, there to lose themselves, so to speak, and not get into the receiver which is tuned for another wave length.

SEALED RADIO SETS

A novel method has been adopted by the Australian Commonwealth radio authorities for protecting broadcasting stations. The regulations recently promulgated require that every prospective purchaser of a receiving set must present to the radio goods dealer a certificate of license showing that he has subscribed to the service of the station operating on the wave length to which the instrument being purchased is adjusted. If a radio enthusiast desires to listen in on additional programs he can have his receiving set so adjusted, but only on the production of certificates showing that he has made separate subscriptions to each. At a recent conference of Federal authorities, manufacturers, broadcasting companies, and dealers, the adoption of a uniform device for sealing receiving sets was decided upon. While the sealed-set regulations may be defeated by certain owners of receiving sets, the Government has authority to make surprise inspections of every set that the seals have not been tampered with. It is understood that the sealing device, which is added locally, will in no way interfere with the sale of American radio sets in Australia.

The WD11 will give as good results as the UV201A as a detector. It is only in the case of an audio frequency amplifier that the UV201A is a better tube. For detection purposes it is not advisable to make any change in tubes, especially since the economy in operation is considerably greater in the WD11.

No radio set in existence will cross the country any and every night. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that KHJ and KFI are heard in New York, the metropolitan district. The super-heterodyne will not do this any quicker than the four or five tube neutrodyne, the first tube radio frequency outfit or the standard Armstrong regenerative set. The feat depends on much more than the number of tubes—weather conditions particularly.

A new type of "B" battery developed by the engineers of the Burgess Battery Company marks a distinct innovation in such batteries. This battery has dimensions and weight which coincide exactly with the standard No. 6 dry cell commonly used for filament current. The new battery is a 22½ volt "B" battery. It is 6 inches high, with

a base 2 inches square. The terminal connections are brass binding posts at the top. By an ingenious method of construction the fifteen cells, individually insulated, are placed in a vertical position in two inner compartments. These compartments are arranged one above the other, and the whole is enclosed in a non-metallic, non-inductive, waterproof container. The electrical capacity of the battery at two milliamperes is about 500 hours, which places it in the group of so-called medium-sized "B" batteries.

Capacity shields have been widely used in the past for eliminating or reducing the troublesome capacity effects in regenerative circuits. It is now claimed that capacity shields should not be employed, in that they decrease signal strength and broaden the tuning. Instead, the builder of a radio set should see that all instruments in the tuning assembly, such as coils, condensers, variometers, variocouplers and so on have the side next the panel and the shaft side connected with the ground side of the grid battery circuit. Audio-frequency transformer cores sometimes need to be grounded. Manufacturers of regenerative sets generally do away with shields by placing the inductance units some distance away from the panel, and using insulator couplings between the dials and the instruments.

Many so-called "bootleg" tubes are appearing on the market and are being offered at lower prices than the standard tubes. Furthermore, in general appearance these tubes resemble quite closely the standard tubes, and are said to have the same operating characteristics. It would seem that the independent tube manufacturers, despite claims to the contrary, could not produce tubes of the thoriated filament type, with extremely low current consumption characteristics, because of the inherent difficulty of making the special filament. Reports from users of independent tubes are generally to the effect that these tubes are not as satisfactory as the standard tubes.

A tube blocks up because of the wrong polarity of the filament battery, also known as the "A" battery. See that the prongs of the vacuum tube are making good contact inside the socket and bend the prongs upward a little bit, or try a new grid leak if the tube does not function properly.

The new Cunningham tube is a high vacuum tube designed for use as an amplifier or detector. The filament current is only one-fourth of that required by the C301, and the lower temperature of the filament insures long life if the tube is properly used. Care should be taken to prevent the plate voltage from being applied accidentally to the filaments. Tubes should be taken from the sockets when connections are being made. The tubes are discolored during the process of manufacture. This has no effect on the operation of the tube. Any tube which is believed to be defective should be returned to the dealer or distributor from whom it was purchased. The filament voltage of this tube is 5 volts. The filament amperes average .25 with a plate voltage of 20 to 100 volts.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

LABORERS FELL LIKE TENPINS

Thirteen railroad workers are in the hospital at New Braunsfels, Tex., and one or two of them will die as the result of a peculiar accident. The men were part of a gang laying steel near here and were being brought near here on a small trailer, pulled by a motor car.

At a curve near here, one of the men lost his balance and grabbed the man nearest to him. This man in turn seized the next man to him as he was being pulled off the car, this procedure continued until all thirteen had been pulled off the car. Several of them fell on their heads and received fractured skulls, while others received broken legs and arms and other minor injuries.

COUGHS UP BULLET

W. V. Meadows of Lanett, Ala., believes in keeping his trophies for a long time. In fact, he keeps them so long that he can't always get rid of them when he wants to.

Meadows is now seventy-eight years old and is a veteran of the Civil War. He was shot during the battle of Vicksburg, the bullet hitting him in the eye. Doctors probed for it, but they were never able to find it nor did they feel that it was safe to perform an operation.

Meadows didn't worry much. He knew that it was in his head somewhere, and all that, but that was all he could do about it. The other day he was suddenly seized with a violent coughing spasm which he couldn't seem to overcome by the ordinary means.

Finally with a great effort he coughed up the bullet, the one that he was presented with during the days of the Civil War. This bullet was in the form of a slug and weighed about an ounce.

RATS IN HAWAII ARE COFFEE TOPERS

Thousands and perhaps millions of sage rats in the Kona district of the Hawaiian Islands have become coffee toppers. They subsist wholly upon the ripe coffee berries and cause big losses to the

growers annually. Although the rats make coffee their sole diet they do not seem to be any the worse off, so far as their physical condition is concerned. They are sleek and fat and scamper about with an undue playfulness, their unusual activity being due to the stimulating activity being due to the simulating character of the food, it is supposed. Coffee growers have so far been unable to cope with the rat pest.

The little animals swarm into the bushes when the berries begin to turn and eat and destroy enormous quantities of the product. It was not until some time after the growing of coffee in the Kona district was started that the sage rats learned to like the taste of the berries. Gradually the addicts increased until now practically every rodent, young and old, will not eat anything else. They even store away large quantities of the ripe berries to tide them over the intervals between crops.

LAUGHS

"I enjoy your wife's playing. She has such a delicate touch." "Yes, she gets that from practising on me."

"Do you think a woman should get the wages of a man?" "It depends on whether she is married to him or not."

"John, ever since we've been married you've never seemed the same. What did I ever do to you?" "You married me."

"You ask my hand in marriage. Aren't you rather ambitious?" "Yes, but I always did strive for big things." From that moment his case was hopeless.

"What are the most important islands on the globe?" asked the geography teacher. And without hesitation the boy from New York answered: "Ellis, Manhattan and Coney."

"Johnny," the teacher asked, "can you tell me anything about Christopher Columbus?" "He discovered America." "Yes. What else did he do?" "I s'pose he went home and lectured about it."

Little Willie—Oh, Uncle George, did you bring your horn? Uncle George—My horn? Why, I have no horn. Little Willie—Then I wonder what papa means when he said you were off on a toot last week.

Little Tommy had spent his first day at school. "What did you learn?" he was asked on his return home. "Didn't learn nothin'." "Well, what did you do?" "Didn't do nothin'! A woman wanted to know how to spell 'cat,' and I told her."

"Waiter," said the traveler in an Erie railroad restaurant, "did you say I had twenty minutes to wait or that it was twenty minutes to eight?" "Nayther. Oi said ye had twinty minutes to ate, an' that's all ye did have. Yer train's just gone."

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NEW COFFEE SUBSTITUTE

A new substitute for coffee has been brought to civilization by a traveler just returned from the interior of Venezuela. He found the Indians of the Meta country toasting a bean called "Amazona," the product of a weed which grows in abundance and is said to have all the characteristics of coffee except caffeine.

SHAVES IN AIRPLANE

The difficulty of shaving in an airplane while flying more than 8,000 feet above the earth was experienced by Major A. S. Fletcher of the Philippine Scouts. In a hurried trip from Zambanga to Manila he took his shaving outfit with him. Using lather, he attempted the job. The lather faded from his face in the gale as fast as he put it on, but he persevered and when he arrived at Malina showed evidence of having had a fairly good shave.

DUG HIS OWN GRAVE BESIDE HIS WIFE'S

Edmund H. Kalbaugh, ninety-five year of age, who was found dead in his bed at the home of his daughter in York, Pa., last week, was buried in a grave which he helped to dig beside that of his wife in the cemetery at Dobb's Ferry, near Hanover.

It had been the desire of Mr. Kalbaugh to live to be 100 years of age, but when he was forced to retire from active work fifteen years ago he began making preparations for the time when he would have to leave this earth. He helped to dig his own grave beside that of his wife, he helped to wall the grave and had a tombstone placed near it and everything was put in readiness for his death.

He had been living with his daughter, Mrs. Katherine March, in York, and his death was due to apoplexy.

DISCOVERS OLD RUINS NEAR MEXICO CITY

The remains of an old civilization have been discovered near Mexico City by Dr. H. L. Kroeber, of the University of California, near San Angel, a suburb of Mexico City. It is believed the ruins found are the oldest in America.

Investigations show the ruins are a pyramid or ancient cemetery.

Dr. Kroeber, while excavating at the base of a lava flow, discovered a portion of the ruins which are covered with many feet of lava, which spread across the southern part of the Federal District of Mexico City during the eruption of a volcano.

Scientists believe the discovery is one of the most important made in Mexico. The remains are believed to be of the period known as Arcaica civilization. Government officials are planning to cut into the lava flow, which in places is more than a hundred feet deep, to examine the ruins.

Several years ago two skeletons with a number of dishes and other objects were found inside a cave in the lava. These skeletons, protected by glass boxes, are still in the positions that

they assumed when the molten lava overcame the early inhabitants of the valley of Mexico.

The new discovery proves that the early inhabitants of the valley were familiar with domestic implements and were also builders of important works.

INDIAN FAIRGROUND FOUND

The Indians who lived in the Southwest before the coming of the Spaniards left no written history, but they did leave mute evidence of their manner of living, the nature of their dwellings, their occupations, ceremonials and myths, revealed through excavations of their former habitations, often nearly obliterated by the falling of the walls and their gradual covering by shifting sand and earth. One of these prehistoric ruins is the Chama Valley, New Mexico, excavated by J. A. Jeancom, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institute, is described in a bulletin just issued by the bureau.

"This ruin," says the description, "known as Po-shu-ouinge, meaning 'Calabash at the end of the ridge village,' is undoubtedly pre-Spanish, as absolutely nothing of a Spanish nature was found in the course of the work. The pottery discovered was of good quality and great variety, which is possibly accounted for by the tradition among the present-day Indians that the village was formerly a place where great fairs were held and there was much trading in pottery and in other artifices. The early inhabitants of Po-shu were excellent workers in stone and bone, the great number of objects of these materials found, including axes, knives, spear-heads, mortars and pestles, scrapers, bone dirks, flutes, awls, needles and beads. A number of little squares and oblongs made of pottery were found, which is supposed were used as tallies in the various games played, or in a game similar to checker which is still played by the Indians of the Southwest.

"The people of Po-shu were farmers, as demonstrated by the seeds of squash, pumpkin, and gourd that were found, and by the charred corn discovered in a few of the rooms. Traditional evidence indicated that the people of the village came originally from some country to the North, whence they gradually migrated Southward to escape the severe winters. From tradition it would also appear that it was their custom to kill the men of their enemies and take the women and children as captives being in many cases assimilated into the tribe. This would in a measure account for the presence in the ruin of foreign types of pottery.

"It is not known just when the village of Po-shu was built or how long it was occupied, but there is good evidence that it was deserted very suddenly, the inhabitants being driven out by the attack of the enemies, panic, or some other cause. After this hasty departure, the ancient habitants of Po-shu vanished completely, as far as our knowledge goes, but we are constantly hearing stories of ruins lying to the west and southwest, and a reconnaissance of this region would be most interesting."

ARGENTINE GIRL TO ESSAY CHANNEL SWIM

Lillian G. Harrison, the twenty-year-old Anglo-Argentine girl who swam across the River Plate Dec. 22, the first person to accomplish the feat, hopes to set another record by being the first of her sex to swim the English Channel. She is planning, with the backing of the Argentine Athletic Federation, to leave for England in May and attempt the crossing during the English summer.

Enrique Tiraboschi, who swam the channel last summer and who accompanied Miss Harrison a part of the distance across the Plate, believes she will succeed in her new venture. The distance she had to swim across the big South American river was 26½ miles in a direct line, somewhat less than the channel swim, and, according to Tiraboschi, the channel currents are no more difficult to master than the Plate currents, though somewhat colder. Tiraboschi himself failed in an attempt to swim the Plate two years ago.

Miss Harrison won cash prizes of 7,000 pesos, two cups and a gold medal for her feat. She accomplished the distance in 24 hours 19½ minutes.

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